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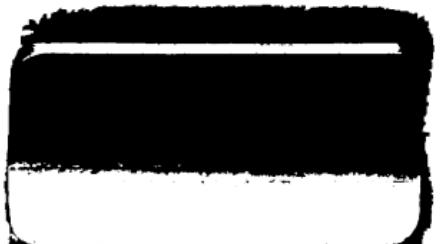
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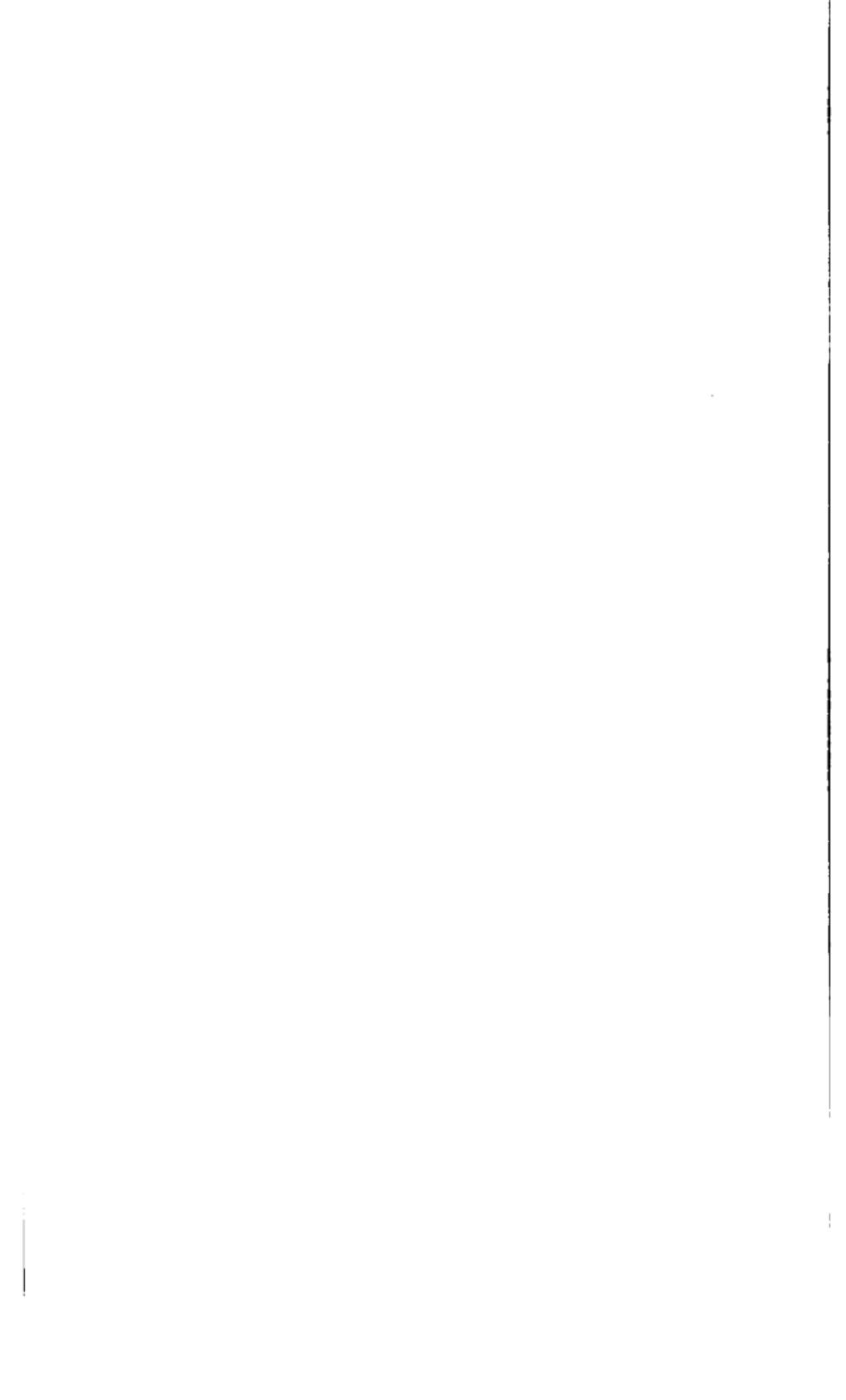
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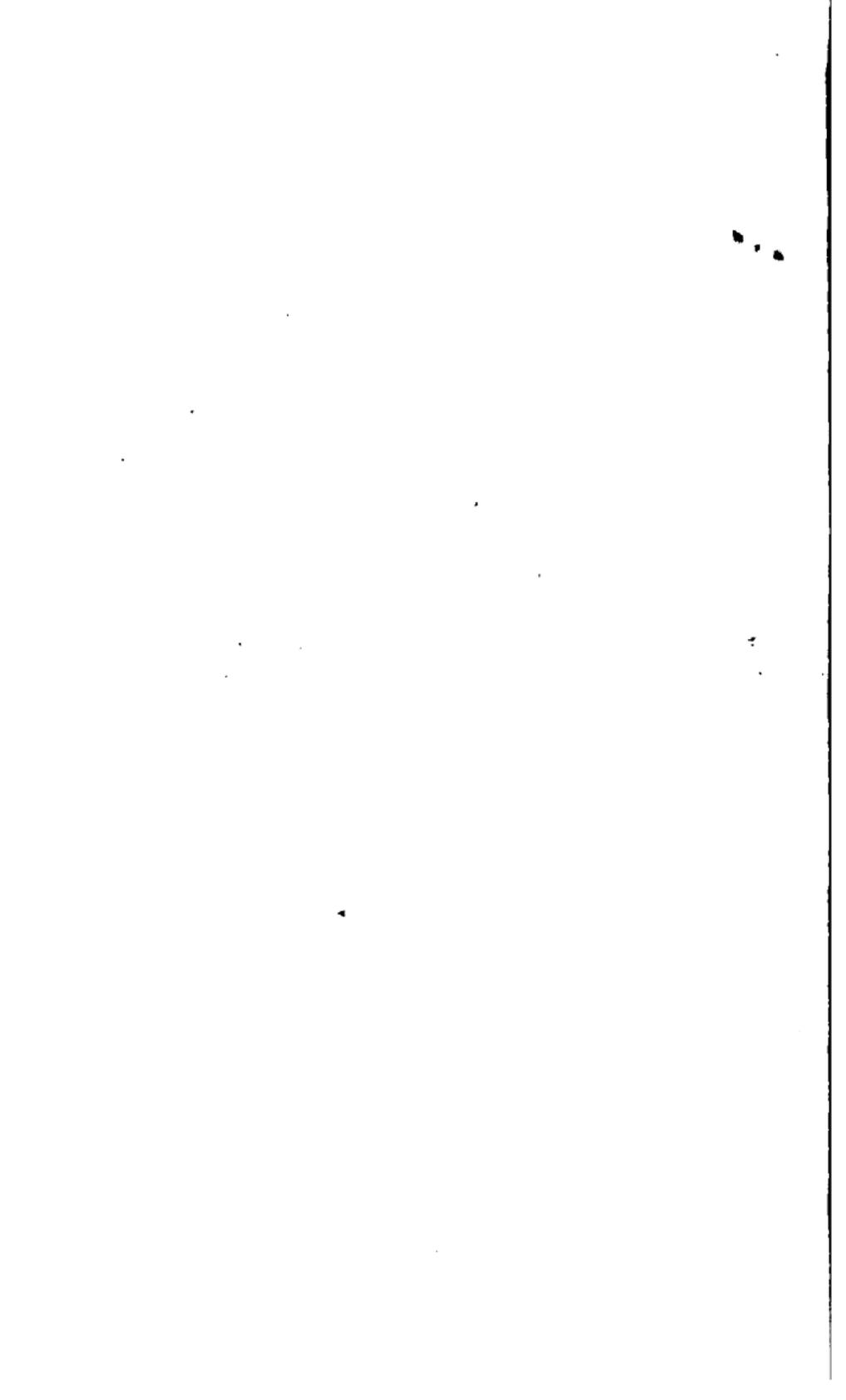




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**LECTURES**  
ON THE  
**BOOK OF JONAH,**  
&c. &c.

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# LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF JONAH,

DESIGNED CHIEFLY  
FOR THE USE OF SEAMEN:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

## TWO DISCOURSES TO SEAMEN,

WITH SOME

PRAYERS AND HYMNS TO BE USED AT SEA.

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*The whole intended as a help to the devotion, and spiritual improvement, of Masters of Ships and their Crews, especially in long voyages.*

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BY THE REV. GEORGE YOUNG, A.M., M.W.S. &c.

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SECOND EDITION:

*With a Preface, containing an interesting account of the conversion of a Sailor, by hearing one of the Lectures read by his Captain.*

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LONDON:

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1832.

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LOAN STACK

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, ABRIDGED.

Several books have been written for the use of Seamen; but the number is by no means so great as to supersede the necessity, or utility, of publishing more: and, it is hoped, that this Volume will be in some degree acceptable to the public, particularly to that valuable class of British subjects, for whose spiritual benefit it is principally designed. Some parts of the Book of Jonah have already been illustrated, with the same view, by pious and excellent writers; the author's plan, however, will not be found to coincide with their's. He has discoursed on the whole Book, and that not in a series of Sermons, but in expository Lectures;—a mode of illustrating scripture perhaps more interesting, both to seamen and to readers in general.

The author has the pleasure of knowing, that it is the laudable practice of some Masters of ships, to read a discourse to the crew, every Lord's day, during their voyages: and it would be well if all Masters would adopt the same method of doing good. The want of an adequate supply of appropriate sermons, for that purpose, was one consideration that induced the author to publish these Lectures, with the two Discourses annexed to them. In reading any of the Discourses, on such occasions, some passages addressed to the relations of Seamen, may be omitted.

To render the Volume more useful, a few Prayers and Hymns, adapted for social or public worship at sea, are subjoined. The former are original, if that term can be applied to compositions in which scripture language is so copiously introduced. The latter are almost all selected from approved authors. The Prayers, though intended for social worship, may be used in secret devotion, by changing plural words into singular, wherever the sense so requires. The Lord's Prayer may be added at the close of them, by such as think it their duty to use it.

*Whitby, March 16, 1819.*

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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Since the First Edition of these Lectures appeared, the Author has been frequently requested to publish another, in a smaller form, and at a lower price, that the Volume might obtain more general circulation, and be productive of more extensive good. With such friendly requests he is now complying; both because the former Edition is nearly out of print, and because he has had pleasing assurances of its success in the great object for which it was designed—the spiritual benefit of Seamen: A remarkable instance of this kind has been recently published, in a Tract, entitled **THE INFIDEL SAILOR CONVERTED**, by the Reverend Thomas Jackson, a respectable Primitive Methodist Preacher, lately stationed at Whitby, and now at North Shields. More than one Edition of this Tract has already been called for, and it is also copied into the Sailor's Magazine, for September, 1831. The facts of the case have been fully authenticated, and were well known to Mr. Jackson, before he had any acquaintance with the author. The narrative affords such pleasing illustrations of the mysteries of a wise and gracious Providence, the power of the Divine word, and the efficacy of fervent, persevering, prayer; and is in other respects so well calculated to instruct and to edify, that no apology need be made for inserting it nearly entire.—After a few preliminary remarks on the ways of Divine Providence, Mr. Jackson thus proceeds:

“The young man whose miraculous conversion we are about to relate, and whom we shall, for convenience, call Jack, was born of parents decidedly pious—parents who devoted their only child to the Lord, and said, with Hannah, “As long as he liveth, he shall be lent unto the Lord.” When the germ of intellect began to unfold itself, they comprehended their parental instructions. They were mindful to nip in the bud the first shoots of obstinacy and passion, and instil and cherish amiable sentiments and habits; they taught him diligently the way of the Lord, and talked to him of the commandments of God, “when they sat in their house, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up.”

At eight years of age, Jack indicated a serious turn of mind. This favourable omen raised the hopes of his parents; many

times they looked forward with joyful expectations to the period, when their son would not only "rock the cradle of declining age," but be a father in Israel, and a useful member of society. But, alas! alas! in a short time, to all human appearance, their hopes were blighted, and their expectations cut off; for, at fifteen, their son associated with two youths of deistical principles, who soon placed in the hands of their new companion, some of their favourite publications; and, at seventeen, Jack was a deist. He threw off all parental restraints, and forgot all filial obligations. The entreaties, reproofs, directions, tears, and groans of his parents, were apparently abortive. "He hated instruction, and his heart despised reproof." He resolved in his mind to be a sailor; and early one morning, prodigal like, he left his father's house, taking with him ten pounds from a private drawer. He wandered to Hull, and engaged with a captain for four years,

During this period, his strong and ardent passions were enlisted, with prodigious effect, in the service of Satan. His irreligion was open and fearless; it was a resistless current, bearing every thing along with it: soon, indeed, did it sweep away the ramparts of religious abegation, and all the restraints it had imposed upon him; till, at last, but little was left to hope, and every thing to fear respecting him. No one could have appeared at a greater distance from the kingdom of God.

At the expiration of his service, Jack had become a confirmed infidel. After spending some time in Hull, he determined to visit Liverpool. Accordingly he commenced his journey, and although he travelled within thirty miles of his father's house, he turned not aside to tarry for a night! On his arrival at Liverpool, he engaged with a captain who was bound for New York. In a short time they set sail; and not many days elapsed before Jack was called upon to witness a scene, which, of all others, was to him the most unpleasant.

The captain and mate, who were truly pious, were accustomed to call together, on the Sabbath day, as many of the men as could be spared, for the purpose of religious worship, which consisted of singing, reading, and praying. This procedure, Jack hesitated not to denounce as nonsense. He cursed and swore bitterly, and many a hundred times he wished himself on shore. The captain told him, that one regulation of the ship was, to fine for every oath. At this remark, Jack found himself annoyed, and, with a heavy oath, declared that he might fine his blood and bones if he liked; he would do his work as a man, but he would have his own way; observing, at the same time, that he had left home because of such nonsense, and he never intended to be plagued and pestered with it abroad. The captain caught one sentence which dropped from the lips of Jack,—*We had left home because of such nonsense*: this begat in his mind a peculiar feeling towards the thoughtless and impenitent youth.

Through the good providence of God, they got safe to New York. Jack had declared many times he would leave the ship. But although he resolved and re-resolved, he never could muster courage and power to go. There was a loadstone in that ship, to which Jack was a stranger—there was a prevalence in the faithful prayers of his parents, with which he was not acquainted.

The time came when they had to return to old England ; and Jack was in his place. On their return, about the second Sabbath, Jack attended the religious services of the day, in a manner he had not been wont to do. During the remainder of the week, he evinced great concern of mind ; and on the following Sabbath, he was fully convinced of the error of his way, while the captain was reading the third Lecture of the Rev. George Young's "Lectures on the Book of Jonah," entitled "Jonah's guilt detected ;" especially the following paragraph :—" In numerous instances, the effects of sin fall not on the sinner alone, but on all who are connected with him. Ungodly parents often entail misery and shame on their offspring ; and, on the other hand, the crimes of children frequently bring down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave. In like manner, how often do we see wicked husbands, brothers, or friends, embittering the lives of their relations, or bringing them to ruin by their vicious courses ! How baneful are the effects of sin ! how wide the havoc which it causes, and the sorrows which it spreads, in families, societies, or states ! We cannot abhor too much, that abominable thing, so hateful to God, and so ruinous to man. Let us hasten to escape from this worst of enemies, by believing in that divine Saviour, who came 'to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself ;' and 'who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' "

It was then that the light of heaven struck the sinner with deep conviction. He was awakened to a sense of his real state. The depravity of his nature, and the evils that had flowed from that corrupt fountain, were laid open to his view. He retired apart and wept. O how gentle and tender are the methods by which God often reclaims the prodigal from his wanderings in a far country !

It was not by the terrors of judgment, that the subject of this narrative was induced to lay down the weapons of his rebellion, which he had so long wielded against the Majesty of Heaven ; but rather, by the still small voice of mercy, overcoming the aversions of a heart wholly set upon the perishable objects of time and sense. The emotions struggling within, could no longer be concealed. Inward conviction of sin led to its external abandonment. The change which took place in the moral habits of Jack, induced the captain to interrogate him in reference to his

family connections ; when he made a frank confession, and told him, that he was born of praying parents, related the manner in which he was brought up, his association with two young men of deistical principles, his leaving home, and the life that he had led since that time. This confession was made with sighing and weeping. The captain gave him suitable instructions, and directed him to the " Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

In a few days after this, Jack "found him of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write," to the joy of his soul. What a happy circumstance! The soul of a prodigal restored—the soul of an infidel saved—the soul of a sailor, on the bosom of the deep, converted from the error of his ways! This event would give joy to angels ; "for there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth ! Old things passed away, and all things became new. Jack was a new creature in Christ Jesus. He often talked with the captain, in a very feeling manner, of his parents, wondering whether they were dead or alive, as he had not heard of them for more than six years; and wished to be at liberty as soon as the ship arrived, that he might return to his father's house. This request was readily granted by the pious captain; for on his arrival in Liverpool, Jack was permitted to go home.

On his way, his mind was variously exercised ; sometimes his spirit rejoiced in him, at the thought, that in a short time, he should communicate to his distressed parents the pleasing intelligence of his conversion to God ; anon, his mind was greatly depressed, lest on arriving at the destined spot, he should be under the painful necessity of dropping the unavailing tear over their mouldering ashes.

At the close of the second day's journey, he arrived at the place of his nativity. On entering the village, he inquired of an old man who was crossing the road, if such a person lived at the high end ; on receiving an answer in the affirmative, his heart leaped for joy. He thought within himself, he would knock at the door, and see if they could recognize him.

On approaching the house, he heard the voice of devotion :—it was his father at prayer. He listened ; and among other petitions, heard the following :—“ O Lord! thou knowest where he is, who is near and dear unto us; if alive, follow him with the stirvings of thy Spirit; and may it please thee to restore the prodigal again to his father's house.”

Jack could no longer forbear ;—he knocked at the door ;—his affectionate mother appeared ;—he threw his arms about her neck and kissed her ; his father, rising from his knees, embraced his long-lost child ; and with inexpressible feelings of pleasure, exclaimed, “ This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” All were suffused with tears ; and every countenance bespoke the inward emotions of the heart.”

At the close of his narrative, Mr. Jackson gives some excellent admonitions—to the Public—*to the Supporters of Seamen's Friend Societies*—*to Captains of Ships*—*to Christian Parents*—*to Sailors*—and *to Ministers*.

The Author is happy to observe, that, since these Lectures and Discourses were first published, other works, having the same object, have made their appearance. Of these, the most useful, perhaps, are ; *SEA SERMONS* (12 in number), by the Rev. George Border, re-published by the Religious Tract Society, at only 1s. and, *THE BETHEL FLAG*, containing 23 Sermons to Seamen, by the Rev. Robert Philip ; also a neat and cheap Volume. Within these few months, another volume of *DISCOURSES TO SEAMEN* has appeared ; and will be found highly interesting, as coming from the pen of the Rev. William Scoresby, F. R. S., &c., &c., formerly a Greenland Captain. To secure for this volume an extensive circulation, it also will require to be republished in a cheap form ; the present price (6s.) being too high for the pockets of most Seamen. The same remark applies to those excellent works of the Rev. R. Marks, formerly an Officer in the Navy ; *THE RETROSPECT*, *THE OCEAN*, and *MORNING MEDITATIONS* ; which, though not so much adapted to be read in public worship, appear eminently calculated to assist Seamen in their private devotions.

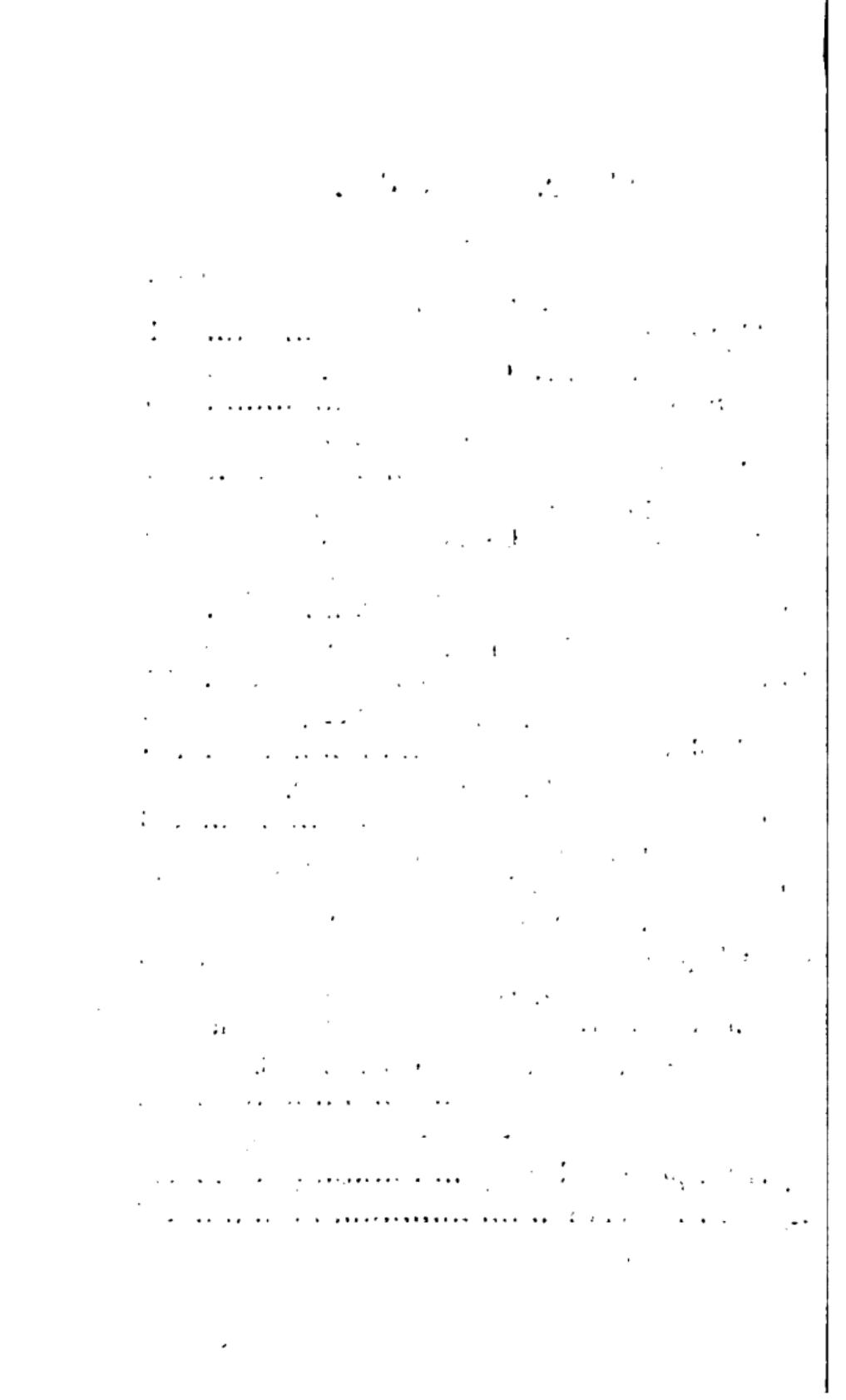
It is gratifying to find, that while there is such an increase of spiritual food for Seamen, there is a corresponding increase of their appetite for such provision. Within the last twelve years, the number of praying Seamen and devout Captains has vastly increased ; and consequently, the practice of having divine service on board every Lord's day, has become far more general. May the practice, not only of weekly, but daily worship, continue to grow and abound, till every ship that crosses the seas, be like a floating temple, consecrated to the honour of God, and enriched with the blessings of his grace !

Whitby, Dec., 1831.

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# LECTURES

## ON THE

# BOOK OF JONAH.

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## LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.—JONAH'S COMMISSION AND FLIGHT.

Chap. I. 1—3.

THE book of Jonah, though numbered with the prophetical books, does not exhibit the same character, being more properly a history than a prophecy. It is not composed of visions and revelations concerning things to come, nor of predictions and exhortations intermingled, as we find in the writings of the other prophets; but presents a simple narrative of a portion of Jonah's life and ministry. This part of his history is more interesting to the church, than creditable to himself; and, as it appears to have been written with his own hand, we have here an instance of the faithfulness of the sacred penmen, who, being guided by the Spirit of God, and not by their own spirit, record their own sins, without attempting to extenuate their

guilt ; and delineate their own imperfections and follies, without trying to cover them with a veil. Had Jonah been actuated by the love of fame, he would not have left unnoticed the prophecies which he delivered respecting the restoration of the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain ; which prophecies were fulfilled in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel :\* but, in writing his book, he “conferred not with flesh and blood,” and, passing over that part of his ministry which might have served to exalt his character, he fixes on that which displays his temper and conduct in the most unfavourable light. He indeed records a most astonishing miracle wrought for his preservation; yet he relates at the same time his shameful disobedience, which gave occasion to that wonderful interposition of Heaven, and sets forth, without disguise, his subsequent ingratitude and peevishness. And it was not for Jonah’s sake that the miracle was recorded, but for the sake of a greater than Jonah ; this part of the prophet’s history being intended as a sign, or type, of the burial and resurrection of our glorious Redeemer.†

Several Jewish writers, after their manner, have clothed the history of Jonah with fables. Some make him the son of the widow of Zarephath ; others, the Shunamite’s son ; others, the young prophet whom Elisha sent to anoint Jehu ; while others suppose, that his father Amittai was the same with the good Obadiah, who saved an hundred of the Lord’s prophets from the

\* 2 Kings xiv. 25. † Mat. xii. 39, 40. xvi. 4.

bloody sword of Jezebel. Setting aside these fancies, we know from better authority; that, like the great prophets Elijah and Elisha, he belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes; and, that, if he was not cotemporary with these prophets, he lived and prophesied soon after their times. He seems to have been the earliest of all the prophetic writers; not excepting Amos, who lived under Jeroboam II, of the events of whose reign Jonah prophesied. We also learn from scripture, that he was of Gath-hepher, or Gittah-hepher, a city in the lot of the tribe of Zebulun.\* He belonged, therefore, to that district of Canaan which was named Galilee: and hence we see, that the invidious reflection which the Jews aimed at Christ, "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," was as false as it was malicious.

It is of more importance for my present purpose to observe, that, as Jonah belonged to that tribe of Israel which "dwelt at the haven of the sea," so there is perhaps no part of the sacred writings more interesting to seamen than his book. In the treasures of sacred truth, which are intended for men of every class and condition, seamen have a special portion assigned them. Here are psalms, prayers, prophecies, and histories, all peculiarly calculated for their benefit. Well may they love the bible, for its divine Author is evidently a lover of seamen. The book of Jonah, particularly the first part of it, sets forth in a very interesting form, the dangers and duties of a sea-faring life. Let me therefore invite the attention of sailors to a portion of

\* 2 Kings xiv. 25. Joshua xix. 13.

scripture that so directly concerns them. Yet let not others suppose, that they have no share in the truths of this book. Some of it is peculiarly adapted to the edification of seamen, but the whole, like the scriptures at large, is fitted by the blessing of God to do good to all; being "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Here are some of the earliest displays of divine mercy to the heathen world; and here we behold the wonders of God's patience and forbearance towards his unworthy servant. While we review the riches of his grace, may that grace apply unto our hearts the truths of his word, "to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus!"

Verses 1, 2. "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amitai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

The God of Israel revealed his mind to his prophets, not only "at sundry times," but "in divers manners;" sometimes by the ministry of angels, sometimes in dreams or visions of the night, and at other times by the immediate suggestions of his Holy Spirit. In which of these ways "the word of the Lord came unto Jonah," we are not informed; but the communication was such as left no doubt that it was of God: and hence his disobedience was the more criminal, as he rebelled against an express revelation from Heaven. The more we are acquainted with the mind of God,

the greater is our guilt if we offend him: the servant that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

The word of the Lord that came unto Jonah was a commission to go and preach against Nineveh ; "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ; for their wickedness is come up before me." For some years, perhaps, the prophet had laboured in his own country; now he is "sent far hence unto the gentiles," that they might taste of "the children's crumbs," as a happy presage of their future admission into the household of God.

The city of Nineveh, to which he is sent, was then the metropolis of the heathen world; for Babylon, which afterwards rivalled and supplanted it, was yet of an inferior order. In point of antiquity, few towns could vie with Nineveh: it was founded in the days of Nimrod, the first mighty conqueror, with whose kingdom it was connected, and from whose son Ninus it is said to have derived its name.\* If ancient historians can be credited, it was of greater extent than any city ever known, not excepting Babylon; for, by their accounts, it was sixty miles in circuit, being nearly nineteen miles in length, and above eleven in breadth. These dimensions are probably not much exaggerated; it is called in chapter iii, "an exceeding great city, of three days journey;" and we find from the close of this book, that it contained no less than an hundred and twenty thousand infants: consequently its whole

\* According to the marginal reading of Genesis x. 11, Nimrod himself was the founder of Nineveh.

population must have been immense, and was perhaps equal to that of London in the present day, while the city itself stood on much more ground than our metropolis. The situation of Nineveh, on the banks of the river Tigris, was peculiarly delightful and commodious; and, as in respect of rank and power, it might be called, like Babylon and Rome in after times, the mistress of the world, being the capital of the extensive empire of Assyria, so it excelled all other towns in riches, in magnificence, and in the strength of its fortifications. The walls were an hundred feet high, and of vast thickness; and were flanked with fifteen hundred towers, each of which rose to the height of two hundred feet.

Unto this great city is Jonah sent, not to admire and celebrate its glory, but to proclaim its guilt and announce its approaching ruin: "Cry against it," says God, "for their wickedness is come up before me." Great towns are generally noted for wickedness. Retirement is most favourable for the growth of piety and virtue; and it is no small proof of the depravity of our nature, that wherever men are collected in large bodies, their morals are found to be corrupted, instead of being improved. Seamen, who are often visiting populous cities, have much need to guard against those temptations to vice which they usually present.

The expression employed to describe the character of Nineveh, implies that it was pre-eminent in guilt, as well as in grandeur; "their wickedness is come up before me." All sin is before God, with respect to his

omniscience; for “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;” “neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened, to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”\* The phrase here used must intimate, that the wickedness of Nineveh was peculiarly offensive to the Holy One of Israel: it had “come up before him,” like the stench of an open sepulchre, or like the nauseous vapour arising from the burning of a putrid carcase: “these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.”† What was said of Sodom and Gomorrah, might now be applied to Nineveh: its sins were so grievous, that they sent up a loud cry unto God, like the voice of Abel’s blood, calling for vengeance on the guilty:§ “their wickedness is come up before me,” to testify against them, and demand their destruction.

Yet the day of Nineveh’s ruin is not fully arrived; and the prophet is therefore sent to “cry against it,” warning the inhabitants of their danger, and calling them to repentance. He was not sent to torment them with useless forebodings of woe, by predicting calamities that were inevitable: the judgments of God might yet be averted by a timely repentance, and to produce this effect was the grand object of his mission. Some years after, when this city had filled up the measure of its sins, Nahum was employed to publish “The burden of Nineveh;” but he was not commanded to travel thither, to preach to the inhabitants; for that was the

\* Prov. xv. 3. Hebr. iv. 13. † Isa. lii. 5. § Gen. xviii. 20, 21. iv. 10.

day of vengeance, when "the wrath was coming upon them to the uttermost." But now there was space given them for repentance; and Jonah well knew, for he perversely made it the ground of his complaint, that he was sent on an errand of mercy, by him who is "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." And since the wicked cannot taste the love of God, without being awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger, the prophet must "cry against" the Ninevites; proclaiming the greatness of their crimes; and the awful judgments that were impending over them: and, knowing the terrors of the Lord, he must not only speak but cry to them; exhorting them with the greatest earnestness, that they might hasten to escape from the wrath to come. To cry against Nineveh might seem an act of hostility, but it was in truth an act of the greatest kindness. Let not those whose sins are reproved by the word, count the preacher an enemy, when he tells them the truth: rather let them regard him as their best friend. To warn transgressors of their danger, is not the most pleasant part of a minister's duty, but it is indispensably necessary, and must be done with faithfulness and earnestness: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."\* Happy was it for Nineveh, that Jonah was sent to cry against it: the threatenings of God, as well as his promises, bespeak the riches of his goodness.

\* Isaiah lviii. 1.

Ver. 3. “But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa ; and he found a ship going to Tarshish : so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

When Jonah received his commission, he prepared for exertion, but not for service. He rose up, to go from home ; but it was to perform a voyage to Tarshish, not a journey to Nineveh. Disliking the orders given him, he was “disobedient unto the heavenly vision ;” and, instead of travelling to the Assyrian capital, as the ambassador of God, he resolved to desert his service, nay, to flee from his presence. Jonah could not be so ignorant as to imagine, that there was any part of the globe where the eye of omniscience could not see him, or the arm of omnipotence could not reach him. He was intimately acquainted with the psalms of David, as appears from his prayer, and therefore must have known those sublime sentiments of the psalmist : “ Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there : If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”\* To escape the notice of God, or elude his control, is impossible. Recollect, my sea-faring friends, that the eye of the Omniscient beholds you at sea, as much as on shore ; and in

\* Psalm cxxxix. 7—10.

foreign parts, as much as in your own country. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."\* But, though Jonah could not flee out of God's sight, he fled from his special presence; from that land where God peculiarly dwelt, and where his prophets and priests ministered before him.

It is hard to say, what was Jonah's precise object in attempting to escape from the land of Israel. If he was resolved to disobey the divine mandate, might he not as well have remained where he was? Perhaps he fancied, that if he were once out of that country where God was specially present, that "valley of vision," the word of the Lord would no more come to him; or, at least, he should get excused from going to Nineveh, and some other prophet would be sent in his stead. Such ideas may indeed appear foolish; but his conduct on this occasion betrayed a degree of infatuation, and cannot be accounted for on any rational principle.

Whatever were his views, his conduct was wholly inexcusable. He could not complain that he was sent to a heathen and distant land, while he was voluntarily abandoning his country, to associate with the heathen in some remote corner of the earth. He could not object to the dangers of the enterprise, while he was madly rushing into greater dangers. He does not

\* Jeremiah xxiii. 23, 24.

plead, like Moses, his incapacity for the work, nor attempt to offer any excuse before the Lord; but answers the summons from heaven by a precipitate flight. Indeed, the chief motives to this act of rebellion were such as he might well be ashamed to own; for in the last chapter, we learn from his own mouth, that he fled to Tarshish, because he knew that God was so gracious, that he would not at this time execute on Nineveh the judgments which Jonah was commanded to denounce: and, therefore, he was afraid that, if he went to predict these judgments, he would be regarded as a false prophet. But was his own reputation of so much account, as to be laid in the balance with the preservation of so many lives, and the salvation of so many sinners? Would he consign to destruction the most populous city on earth, rather than run the risk of encountering reproach? But indeed, his fears on this head were imaginary, and the very reason that induced him to rebel, ought to have operated as a stimulus to obedience. Was it not a higher honour to be a herald of mercy, than a minister of vengeance? Was it not infinitely better that his labours should issue in the salvation of the Assyrians, than in their destruction? Had Jonah been sent on a service peculiarly mortifying, it would have been criminal for him to have spurned at the authority of God; how much more when his mission was truly honourable, and likely to prove successful? He was appointed the prophet of the gentiles, and he ought to have magnified his office, like the apostle of the gentiles, that he might

provoke his own brethren to emulation, and might save some of them :\* for, if the repentance of Nineveh should turn to the reproach of Israel, might not this be employed as an argument with the latter, to rouse them from their gross stupidity, and turn them to God? Yet, in spite of all these considerations, which ought to have made Jonah's commission desirable, he refuses to accept it, and shamefully runs off from the presence of the Lord. There are times when it may be said even to God's honoured servants, " Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." How widely did the temper of Jonah, on this occasion, differ from that of Paul, who in the view of bonds and afflictions, could boldly say, " But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God ! "†

To escape the more effectually from the service assigned him, Jonah resolves to cross the seas. Many have gone to sea to avoid punishment; and many, like Jonah, to be exempted from disagreeable duties. Let us not choose our profession, nor regulate any of our affairs, in the spirit of caprice and folly; much less in the spirit of perverseness and disobedience; but yield to the calls of duty, and follow the leadings of Providence. Never enter on any enterprise, without seeking direction from above; nor move one step in any undertaking, where you cannot look for the blessing

\* Romans xi. 13, 14. † Acts xx. 24.

of the Lord. “ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”\*

In pursuance of his design, Jonah repairs to Joppa, which was not on the coast of Zebulun but on that of Dan, and lay considerably to the south of Jonah’s residence; this port being probably preferred, not because it was nearest, but because it was the principal port in Israel for foreign trade, where a passage to Tarshish was of course most likely to be obtained. Joppa, formerly called *Japko*, and now *Jaffa*, was a place of considerable note, and high antiquity. Some authors have carried the date of its erection beyond the deluge, and adorned its early history with fictions.† It is well known as the scene of several transactions recorded in scripture, and as the haven where a great part of the merchandise brought to Jerusalem was imported. At present, its harbour is mean, its inhabitants are few, and some ruinous walls and towers are the only vestiges of its ancient grandeur. Thither Jonah went down, with a view to embark for Tarshish. Where this latter place was, is very uncertain: some make it Tarsus in Cilicia; some, Cadiz, or Tartessus, in Spain; and some, Tunis, or Carthage, on the African coast, where the ancient Phœnicians planted colonies: while others consider Tarshish merely as a name for the sea; and, according to them, going to Tarshish means the same thing with going to sea.‡ Possibly the term might be applied to any foreign and distant port, and ships trading to foreign countries, which

\* Proverbs iii. 6. † Plin. Hist. Nat. 1. 5. c. 18. Hieron. in Jonam. § This is St. Jerome’s opinion. Hieron. in Jonam.

were usually the largest ships, might be called ships of Tarshish, in opposition to small coasting vessels.\* It was of little moment to Jonah what port he sailed for, provided it was sufficiently remote from the land of Israel.

When men are wandering from the path of duty, God sometimes throws obstructions in their way, to shew them that they are wrong; but providence, instead of checking Jonah in his mad career, seemed to favour his purpose: for, on his arrival at Joppa, he found a ship taking in goods and passengers for Tarshish, and, it would seem, just ready for sea; so that he immediately paid his fare, and went on board, congratulating himself on having met with such a favourable opportunity. We must not flatter ourselves that our designs are good, because providence appears to concur with them; for God may throw temptations in our way, to try our faith and our obedience. We ought, indeed, to observe the openings of providence, seeking to be led in a right path; but never let us set God's providence in opposition to his word, nor fancy that opportunities for sin can warrant us in committing it. It was not a kindness, but a chastisement to Jonah,

\* Either the word must have been used in some such general sense, or it must have been the name of more places than one; for there were ships that sailed for Tarshish from Ezion-geber, a port in the Red Sea; 2 Chron. xx. 36. Solomon's navy of Tarshish, or foreign-bound navy, traded principally to Ophir; and Jehosaphat's ships of Tarshish were destined for the same trade; 1 Kings ix. 26-28. x. 22. xxii. 48. 2 Chron. viii. 17, 18. Yet Tarshish occurs in a list of particular countries or places, in Ezekiel xxvii. 12: Perhaps it was the name of some noted distant port, but came to be used as an appellative; in the same way as *Pharus*, and other ancient names.

that he was allowed to execute his purpose with so much facility. Had he been detained some time at Joppa, or compelled to wander to another port in quest of a vessel, the delay might have produced reflection, and reflection might have brought him to a sense of his folly. Things that are done rashly are often ill done, and the rapidity of Jonah's movements seems to have kept him from taking a serious view of his preposterous conduct.

As the vessel was bound to a distant port, the fare for the voyage would be something considerable, yet Jonah readily paid it in going on board. Many will expend, to please their own humour, what they would not part with for God's glory. The lusts of men are far more expensive than the service of God; and many will give large sums to gratify their pride and their passions, when nothing could persuade them to make the same sacrifice for the extension of Christ's kingdom. The prophet was not a man of that temper, yet, now that he was wandering from God, he too paid for his folly; and perhaps what he gave for his passage to Tarshish, would have more than defrayed his expenses to Nineveh.

Having paid his fare, he went down into the ship, among the seamen, and the other passengers to Tarshish, if there were any other. In fleeing from the presence of the Lord, and the company of his people, he got into society very unfit for a prophet of God: for though the ship's crew were by no means of the worst character, they were all worshippers of false gods, with whom he ought not to have associated,

except with a view to their conversion. He would not go to Nineveh to preach to the heathen; and now, in fleeing to Tarshish, he herbs with the heathen, and becomes a witness of their idolatries, and, in some sense, a sharer in their crimes. Such as shun the path of duty, run headlong into the way of sin: such as despise the privilege of communion with God, and flee from his presence, are very likely to have fellowship with the workers of iniquity.

All should be careful in the choice of their company, but especially those who go to sea: for at sea you cannot change your company, nor avoid the society of those who would injure your souls. When seamen have it in their power to select, let them always prefer those situations and connexions which are most favourable to their spiritual interests. Captains will find it an unspeakable advantage to have crews that fear God; and in like manner, sailors will find the same advantage in being under the care of religious captains. Even passengers, when they have opportunity, should take care to choose those ships in which God is feared and worshipped, in preference to those in which his laws are disregarded, and his name is blasphemed. There is too much danger of forgetting God at sea, under any circumstances; but the danger is doubled, when a voyage is performed with a wicked crew. Yet, brethren, if such should be your lot, do not imagine that you will be justified, or excused, in adopting the language and copying the manners of those with whom you sail, or in yielding to the temptations

with which they may assault you. Resolve to serve God, though you should be alone in his service; and, if you meet with sneers and repreaches on account of your religion, bravely encounter them all without shrinking: “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”\* Such as laugh at religion, and make a mock at sin, are the real fools; such as steadfastly cleave unto God are the excellent of the earth. There is no madness equal to that which ruins the soul; and the greatest wisdom is to be “wise unto salvation.”

My brethren, let me further remind you, that no companion that can be with you at sea is so bad as an evil heart. If your worst enemy be within, it signifies little what company you have without. Seek, then, to have your hearts renewed by divine grace. Seek “to be washed, to be sanctified, to be justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”† Without this renovation of nature, you cannot be truly happy, either on land or at sea; you can have no solid peace in this life, and no firm hope of life everlasting. But, if “Christ dwell in your heart by faith,” if his Holy Spirit abide within you; then, wherever you go, and whatever may be your company, you will enjoy a delightful communion unknown to the world; for you will be able to say in your sweet experience; “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.”

\* Hebrews xii. 3. † John iii. 9.

## LECTURE II.

### JONAH OVERTAKEN BY THE STORM.

#### Chap. I. 4—6.

Verse 4. “But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.”

When Jonah was deserting the service of his God, and attempting to flee from his presence, providence appeared at first to forward his designs. He found a vessel at Joppa, ready to sail for Tarshish, he was taken on board as a passenger without delay, the vessel sailed soon after with a fair wind, and he flattered himself with the prospect of a quick and pleasant voyage. But how can we expect to prosper in sin? Jonah soon found to his cost, that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord.

The prophet was a disobedient servant, but God has servants who never rebel. All the elements are at his call; the stormy wind fulfils his word; and now a fierce wind is despatched, as a swift messenger, to arrest and bring back the fugitive. Among the fabled deities of Greece and Rome, there was a god of the winds, supposed to have the power of controlling ‘and

directing their motions, of sending them forth and calling them back: but the Lord is the true God of the winds; "he bringeth the wind out of his treasures," to cast it abroad on the face of the earth; and again, he "gathereth the wind in his fists," to lay it up in his storehouse.\* Nothing in nature is less under our power than the wind: it is like the dew or the rain, "that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." Indeed, it is not only beyond our control, but almost without the compass of our knowledge; for its natural causes have never been fully investigated. This we know, however, that the winds are entirely governed by the Omnipotent; and from whatever point of the compass they arise, and whether they come in gentle breezes or furious blasts, they receive their commission from the supreme Ruler, and are sent to fulfil his wise designs. Remember, seamen, that the winds belong to God: to him you are indebted for prosperous gales; and it is his voice that bids the storm arise, and again commands it to be still. Recollect too, that as the winds and the storms never blow by chance, so they never come but for some important end. Think not that God will leave the elements to act at random: he assigns to every storm its appointed work, which it can neither miss nor exceed. He says to the wind, as well as to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

Whatever may be the laws of nature that regulate the wind, that God who established these laws can

\* Psalm cxlviii. 8. cxlv. 7. Prov. xxx. 4.

suspend or vary them at his pleasure ; and the strong wind, which he sent in pursuit of Jonah, may be called preternatural. The ship had put to sea with a favourable breeze ; the mariners, generally skilled in discerning the face of the sky, saw no symptoms of an approaching storm ; the state of the weather led them to anticipate a prosperous voyage : but scarcely had they lost sight of the harbour, when the skies began to lower, and the winds to rage ; and hence the sea, which was but gently ruffled, now rose with a tremendous swell. Sometimes commotions may be observed in the upper regions of the air, while nothing of the kind is felt below ; but this wind beat on the face of the waters as if it had been cast " into the sea ; " so that its effects were sudden and terrible ; " there was a mighty tempest in the sea," the waves rolled mountains high, and the ocean was agitated to its lowest bed.

The tempest was peculiarly directed against the vessel that carried Jonah. Perhaps in some parts of the Mediterranean the wind was moderate, but where this Tarshish ship was sailing it blew a hurricane : here the storm vented all its fury ; here the force of the winds was concentrated ; " so that the ship was like to be broken." The Hebrew phrase is, " the ship *thought* to be broken : " it seemed as if the vessel itself felt the indignation of God, and was ready to break in pieces at the touch of his almighty hand. The scene that was now witnessed must have been truly terrific. The loud winds blew with increasing ferocity ; the

swelling billows rose higher and higher; the ship, tossed on the heaving ocean, was mounting towards heaven, and anon descending into the deep; while the foaming surge was now and then breaking over her, and threatening to overwhelm her. The trembling bark seems ready every moment to founder, or go to pieces: the sails are torn, the masts and yards are splitting or breaking, the rigging is giving way, and the whole vessel, violently strained, looks as if it would instantly burst asunder, and part into a thousand fragments. Such scenes, my dear seamen, you have often beheld. Oft have you seen "the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." O that you would learn to admire and fear, to praise and serve him! Does not the foaming of the waves, raised by "the blast of his nostrils," remind you of his fierce wrath against the workers of iniquity? Does not the howling of the tempest sound in your ears like his dreadful voice? "Stand in awe, and sin not" against a God so glorious.

Ver. 5, 6. "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man to his God, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them: but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."

When the mariners were putting to sea, their prospects were fair, and their spirits were elevated: but now, how great the change! they are full of

perplexity and alarm. How mutable is the state of man! In crossing the sea of life, we often find the most brilliant prospects darkened by sudden storms of adversity. Human enjoyments are at best uncertain ; and, of all men, sailors are the most exposed to the vicissitudes of life. They are “in jeopardy every hour;” “in deaths oft.” Of all men, therefore, they are most urgently called to a life of true religion.

“ The mariners were afraid :” and well they might; such a tempest must needs alarm, not only inexperienced passengers, but the most hardy and resolute seamen. Tossed about by the fury of the tempest, while the yawning deep was every instant threatening to devour them, they felt themselves on the verge of an eternal world, and saw the king of terrors advancing to grasp them. There is something frightful in the approach of death, even in the most favourable circumstances; and the thoughts of perishing at sea, where the body sinks in the waves, while the soul is hurried into eternity, must strike terror into the boldest heart. But “ the sting of death is sin.” Where sin is pardoned, fear is in a great measure subdued, for death can do no real or permanent harm ; but how lamentable is the case of the guilty wretch, who is overwhelmed not only by the waves of the sea, but by the weight of his own crimes ! How appalling is the view of death, to him who is plunging into eternity under a load of guilt, that will “ drown him in destruction and perdition ! ” What is it to sink onto the bottom of the deep, in comparison of sinking into the bottomless

pit? What is it to be cast into the ocean, compared with being cast into the gulf of woe, the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone? My brethren, if you would face storms and dangers without fear, go not to sea under the burden of guilt; give yourselves no rest till you obtain the pardon of your sins, through the merits of Christ's atoning blood; that, "being justified by faith, you may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that, when dangers surround you, and death stares you in the face, you may trust in God as your shield, and "rejoice in hope of his glory." He that has listened to the "still small voice" of the gospel of peace, and accepted the offers of salvation through Christ, need not tremble at the loud voice of the tempest, though it should sound like the trumpet of death, summoning his soul into the eternal world. But if perils overtake you in a state of guilt, what must be the consequence? The immediate prospect of death, judgment, and eternity, will awaken the sleeping conscience, produce the most bitter reflections on the past, and excite the most dreadful apprehensions for the future. Such was now the case with the Tarshish mariners: they felt themselves sinners: their own hearts condemned them; and the light of nature taught them to look for a judgment to come, while it furnished no knowledge of a Saviour, presented no well grounded hope of forgiveness, and held out no prospect of a blessed immortality. But if, in such circumstances, distracting fears arise in the breast of a heathen, what must be the feelings of the more guilty

wretch, who has spurned at the offers of redeeming love, trodden under foot the blood of the Son of God, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace? Ah! what bitter remorse, what keen anguish, what inexpressible horror, must seize the gospel-despiser, when he finds himself sinking into endless perdition,—irrecoverably lost! The pains of hell already attack him, and the worm that never dieth begins to gnaw his heart. “O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!”

But fear has often a salutary influence, and the fears of the mariners led them to devotion: for they all betook themselves to prayer, according to their views of it; “they cried every man unto his God.” Professed christians who neglect to pray, are worse than the heathen; for prayer, especially in times of danger, is taught by the dictates of natural conscience. If there is a God, he is worthy of adoration; and, if he has mercies to bestow, or judgments to inflict, it is fit that we should humbly approach his throne, to solicit the one, and deprecate the other. The Tarshish seamen learned, from the light of nature, the doctrine of a providence, and the duty of prayer; and now, in the hour of danger, they send up their earnest supplications towards heaven, begging for deliverance with loud cries. Sinners are often driven to their duty, by a sense of danger, when no other principle could have the same effect. Perhaps the mariners had not long before been cursing and blaspheming; for many will curse when they are in safety, and pray when they are

in danger. Alas ! how can such men expect to be heard, when they lift up their cries to the God whom they blaspheme! There is something base and ungenerous in the idea of insulting and neglecting God when we are tasting his goodness, and seeking him only when we feel his anger. If you wish to be welcomed at the throne of grace in time of need, approach it often in the season of health and comfort. He that habitually converses with God in prayer, will find him a present help in trouble ; and those who make devotion their daily employment, will find it a sweet resource in difficulties and dangers. Yet it is well, if men are brought unto God, though they are driven to him by his terrors, rather than constrained by his love. Alas ! there are some whose hard hearts have scarcely been affected even by the most awful dangers : nay, shocking to tell ! seamen have been known to blaspheme amidst the horrors of the storm, and to pour forth curses while they were almost in the jaws of death ; as if the impious wretches would bid defiance to the throne of God, and rebel before the very judgment-seat ; as if they wished to anticipate the language of the pit of woe, and breathe the air of hell before they reached it. “O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united !”

The mariners “cried every man unto his god.” Though they traded to the land of Israel, they came not thither to “buy the truth,” but to procure the gain of this world : they were ignorant of the true riches and glory of that land ; for they knew not the God of

Isrel, nor the blessings of his covenant. The word of prophecy assigns to the ships of Tarshish the honour of bringing converts unto God,\* but this ship of Tarshish was manned with idolaters, who had "gods many and lords many;" and who gave to those dumb idols, those imaginary deities, the honours which belong to the God of heaven and earth. It would seem, that there were about as many gods worshipped on the occasion, as there were mariners on board, for every man cried unto his own god. Perhaps they were of different tribes or cities, each having peculiar deities; yet, as every heathen nation followed polytheism, even those who were of one nation had an abundant choice of deities, and each man addressed his prayer to the god whom he fancied to be his tutelar deity, or from whom he had most hopes of relief. Blessed be God who has given us the knowledge of himself! "To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."† We have a God, in whose power and wisdom, goodness and faithfulness, we may always confide; the "God of our salvation, who is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off, upon the sea."§ "Call upon me," he says, "in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."‡ Such is our exalted privilege; and if we seek not this all-sufficient God in the hour of danger, the heathen will rise up in judgment with us, and condemn us. If British

\* Isaiah ix. 9. † 1 Cor. viii. 5; 6. § Psalm lxv. 5. ‡ Psalm l. 15.

seamen neglect to worship the true and living God, it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the seamen of Tyre and Sidon, the seamen of Tarshish and Ophir, than for them.

While the mariners prayed for deliverance, they did what they could to procure it; for they lightened the ship, that she might be in less danger of sounding. The blessings of God are commonly received in the use of means; and we only insult him, if we pray for those blessings, without employing the means adapted to obtain them. If the husbandman neglects to cultivate his fields, how can he presume to pray for an abundant harvest? The thoughts of God's all-sufficiency, and the promises of his aid, instead of inducing habits of sloth, should encourage our efforts as well as our prayers. When Paul, in his perilous voyage to Rome, had assured his companions that God would preserve the lives of all on board, he told them immediately after, that this could only be done, through the skill and exertions of the seamen; "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."\* So it is also in spiritual matters. We cannot consistently pray for holiness, while we are neglecting the means of grace; and the hope of experiencing the operations of the Holy Spirit, ought not to relax, but stimulate our endeavours: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."†

The method employed by the seamen for their

\* Acts xxvii. 22-31. † Philippians ii. 12, 13.

preservation, was to throw part of the cargo over board: they "cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them." They had promised themselves large profits on those wares, at the end of their voyage; yet now they are willing to part with them, to save their lives. It is a true saying, though it was uttered by the father of lies; "All that a man hath will he give for his life."\* It was better to sink half the cargo, nay the whole of it, than be sunk by it to the bottom. Of what service are the most precious goods to those who are on the verge of eternity? Nay, they are worse than useless, when they are ruining their owners. Too often have riches brought destruction on their possessors: many have they sunk in the depths of the sea, and many more in the gulf of perdition. O that men would set a proper value on their best life, the life of their souls; and cast off those worldly attachments which would ruin them for ever! "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what should a man give in exchange for his soul?"† As nothing on board was so valuable as the lives of the seamen and every thing else must be sacrificed for their preservation; even so, nothing in man is so precious as his soul, and all the concerns of the body, and of the present world, should be deemed as nothing, compared with its salvation. Is natural life so highly prized, and shall eternal life be set at nought? O that all men and especially seamen, who are so often hovering on

\* Job ii. 4. † Matthew xvi. 26.

the brink of an eternal world, would give earnest heed to the interests of their immortal souls! Ah! how mad is the conduct of those, who ruin their souls for ever, to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season!

But where was Jonah, while these things were passing in the Tarshish trader? One would have expected that, like Paul in a similar case, he would have been the most active and conspicuous person on board; that he would have been directing the views of the sailors to the God of salvation, and making them acquainted with his doctrines and promises. But far otherwise was he now occupied: “Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, and he lay, and was fast asleep.” Before the storm arose, he had gone below, and lying down in some retired part of the ship, he fell asleep; and was so fast asleep, that neither the roaring of the winds nor the dashing of the waves, neither the tossing of the ship nor the cries of the sailors, had awaked him. Perhaps he had got little sleep from his leaving Gath-hepher; till he came on board; and hence, his mind and body being both exhausted, he fell into a deep sleep, when he lay down to rest in the vessel. Yet his sleeping at this time can scarcely be excused; for it shewed that he was little concerned about the wickedness of his conduct in running off from God’s service. One would have thought, that his anxiety on account of his disobedience and disgraceful flight, would have kept him awake, or at least have prevented him from sleeping soundly. Of all men on board he had most reason to be awake, and

to be employed in prayer ; yet he only is fast asleep, while all the rest are toiling and praying. It too often happens, in public calamities, that those whose sins have procured them are least affected with them : the most guilty are often the most secure. Let us not count such insensibility enviable : it is the worst of curses. Ah ! how many sinners sleep on in carnal security, in spite of the loudest warnings, and never awake, till they lift up their eyes in hell ! It was not Jonah's happiness, but his misery, that he was now asleep : and it was a mercy to him, and to all on board, that God did not suffer him to sleep on, till he and they had sunk beneath the waves.

While we condemn the thoughtlessness of Jonah, we cannot but commend the laudable concern of the shipmaster for the welfare of those entrusted to his care. Missing his Israelitish passenger, who had not appeared on deck since the commencement of the storm, he went down to seek him ; and finding him asleep, he calls him up to engage in prayer. The conduct of this heathen may furnish a lesson to many captains who are called christians. Every master of a ship should consider his crew and passengers as his family, and feel it his duty to attend to their best interests. He has not only the charge of their bodies, but, to a certain extent, the charge of their souls ; and may do much for promoting their spiritual and eternal good. As this Tarshish captain called up Jonah to pray, so should every captain encourage prayer, and the reading of the holy scriptures, on board his ship.

By giving countenance to religion, and setting his face against all manner of profaneness and immorality, a master may be eminently useful, by the blessing of God, in edifying the good, and reclaiming the vicious and thoughtless. It is the interest, as well as the duty, of all officers, to encourage piety and virtue among those who are under them ; for the latter will be found dutiful and faithful, in proportion as they are impressed with the fear of God, and acquainted with the doctrines and duties inculcated in his word. When masters countenance swearing rather than praying, and drunkenness and disorder instead of sobriety and decorum, it is no wonder if they find themselves despised and disobeyed. Teach men to fear God, and they will then respect their superiors, and be faithful to their employers.

The reproof which Jonah received from the captain was very just and seasonable ; "What meanest thou, O sleeper ? arise, call upon thy God ; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." How effectually does sin degrade us ! Jonah might have been reproving the Ninevites, the lords of the world, and admonishing the king of Nineveh himself ; but now, having deserted his duty, he meets with the reproofs of a heathen seaman. Yet it was good for the prophet, that God sent him this seasonable rebuke, even through the mouth of a heathen ; as it served to bring him to his senses. Well might the master expostulate with Jonah on the madness of his insensibility : "What meanest thou, O sleeper ?" Art thou alone indifferent about the wrath of Heaven, and the approach of death ?

Art thou only without a God, without religion ? What meanest thou by this strange unconcern ? "Arise, call upon thy God ; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."

Probably the master knew, or suspected, that Jonah was an Israelite ; and as, in trading to Joppa, he might hear something about the greatness of the God of Israel, he might expect that Jonah's God would prove superior to the gods whom he and his crew had been adoring, and would be better able to help them in this extremity. He therefore exhorts the drowsy prophet, to arise and call upon his God, in the hope that he might have mercy upon them. Amidst difficulties and dangers, it is good not to let go our hope; for where despair enters, exertion is at an end. The captain's prospects were dark in the extreme, yet a ray of hope faintly shone through the gloom. Escape was next to impossible ; yet, who could tell but that the God who raised the tempest so suddenly, might as quickly still it ? The deities already invoked had rendered no assistance, yet relief might be obtained from Jonah's God. "Arise, call upon thy God ; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The words in which his hope is expressed are remarkable ; "if so be that God will *think upon us*." The same kind of language is often used by the people of God, to express their humble expectations of his mercy. Thus Nehemiah prayed ; "Think upon me, my God, for good :" and the dying prayer of the converted malefactor was ; "Lord, remember me when thou comest

into thy kingdom." If the Lord have gracious thoughts towards us, and remember us with that favour which he bears unto his people, all shall be well. We must not prescribe to him any particular plan of operation, but leave it to himself to accomplish our deliverance in his own way.

The hopes of the shipmaster were far from being sanguine ; there seemed to be no more than a possibility of escaping ; and yet he urges Jonah to pray, though the prospect of success was extremely faint. A bare chance of deliverance appeared sufficient to warrant the most fervent prayers, and most strenuous efforts. O that men were as eager for the salvation of their immortal souls ! Did the gospel merely state, that peradventure we may be saved by coming to Jesus, even this would justify every possible endeavour to obtain a redemption so invaluable. How inexcusable then are we, if we neglect this great salvation, while there is not merely a possibility or a probability, but a full assurance given us, that he who believeth shall be saved, that he who cometh unto Christ shall in no wise be cast out ; and while we hear the voice of a redeeming God, beseeching us to accept the offers of his grace, proclaiming to lost sinners, " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely ! " \* What meanest thou then, O careless hearer of the gospel ? Arise, call upon God, lest thou perish for ever. Shake off thy spiritual sloth ; awake from thine unwarrantable slumbers ; and flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.

\* Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 16. vi. 37. 2 Cor. v. 20. Rev. xxii. 17.

Is not the salvation of thy soul at stake? Is not eternal life freely offered thee? Art thou not hanging between life and death; ready to fall into everlasting perdition, if mercy prevent not? Why then despise the offers of infinite love? Why refuse to flee from the wrath to come? O reject not this great salvation, procured by the blood of the Son of God, and generously granted without money and without price! "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

## LECTURE III.

### JONAH'S GUILT DETECTED.

#### Chap. I. 7—10.

**Ver. 7.** “And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.”

We may figure to ourselves the consternation of Jonah, when he awoke and beheld the horrors of the tempest, while his own conscience told him, that he was the man who had provoked the wrath of Jehovah, and whom this righteous judgment was so fiercely pursuing. No doubt he complied with the captain's wholesome advice, and prayed earnestly to his God for deliverance: yet his prayers appeared to have no more effect than those of the heathen sailors; the storm was sent to arrest him, and bring him back, and it would not abate till its object was gained.

But, though Jonah prayed and made confession to God, he did not as yet acknowledge his guilt to the people on board: and now they fall upon a method of discovering the cause of the storm, that something may be done, if possible, to appease the wrath of offended

Heaven. The light of nature had taught them, to view the calamities which fall upon mankind as punishments inflicted for sin; especially those calamities which are sudden and striking, and which human agency has no share in producing. Such sentiments are natural even to the most untutored minds. When Paul and his companions in peril had been shipwrecked at Melita, and a viper started up from among the sticks which they had thrown on the fire, and fastened on Paul's hand, the natives instantly concluded, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."<sup>4</sup> They supposed him to be some notorious criminal, whom an offended Deity had marked out for destruction; and who, having narrowly escaped from one minister of vengeance, was now overtaken by another. In the application of this principle, mistakes may sometimes be made, as in the instance now quoted, and in the case of Job, whose unparalleled troubles were supposed to have been sent for some enormous crimes: yet the principle is just upon the whole; natural evil is the fruit of moral evil, and heinous sins are frequently punished with remarkable judgments. Since, therefore, the tempest that pursued Jonah was so extraordinary, both in its rise and its effects, the Tarshish mariners naturally judged, that some one on board had grossly insulted the majesty of Heaven, and brought down upon them the weight of divine vengeance.

Under this impression, the seamen resolve on

\*Acts xxviii. 4.

endeavouring to find out, who was the sinner, and what was the sin, that had involved them in such awful dangers. This was a laudable resolution. Times of affliction and peril are proper seasons for self-examination: men ought then to investigate the causes of the divine displeasure, and particularly to inquire after their leading sin, that Jonah which would sink their souls, that it may be utterly cast out, to prevent their ruin. Our hearts and lives must be seriously and impartially examined, as in the sight of God, and with earnest prayers for his enlightening grace. “Shew me wherfore thou contendest with me.” “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”\*

In resolving to inquire into the cause of their trouble, the mariners are unanimous; and in such perils unanimity is of no small importance; many a gallant ship has been lost, and many precious lives have been thrown away, through the want of union among the officers and crew; for, while some adopt one plan, and some another, it is no wonder if confusion and destruction ensue. Whether this proposal originated with the captain, or with some other person, they all felt it as proper and necessary. It would seem, that none of them suspected himself to be the guilty person. They were all sinners, and the consciousness of guilt was sufficient to awaken their fears; but perhaps none of them had recently committed any flagrant

\* Job x. 2. Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

crime, which could be supposed to require some signal judgment. It is of unspeakable moment, amidst afflictions and dangers, "to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men." "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."\*

The method proposed for detecting the guilty individual, is the casting of lots, a practice which was not uncommon among the heathen, and which, in the present case, seemed highly expedient; for since the storm was evidently the work of Providence, it was fit that the discovery of its cause should be sought in the decision of Providence. The casting of the lot is an appeal to God, as the omniscient and righteous judge, to decide, or make known, something which is beyond the reach of our understanding, or which we voluntarily refer to his determination. It was often used among God's ancient people, as well as among the heathen, to stop or prevent keen debates; for "the lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty;" and its decisions, when fairly procured, were submitted to as the decrees of Heaven; agreeably to the declaration of scripture, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."† We find it employed in affairs of the greatest weight; as, in the division of Canaan among the tribes of Israel; in detecting the guilt of Achan, and that of ~~Je~~than; and in the election of Saul to the throne of Israel, and of Matthias to the apostleship. § The

\* Acts xxiv. 16. 1 John iii. 21. † Prov. xviii. 18. xvi. 33. ~~30~~  
hua xviii. 10. vii. 16-18. 1 Samuel x. 20, 21. Acts i. 24-26.

casting of the lot, therefore, is to be regarded as an ordinance of Heaven, which must be observed with all due solemnity, and should never be prostituted to any vain or frivolous uses. Upon this principle, cards and dice, with all games of chance, must be condemned, as being profanations of what is sacred. Independent of the spirit of gambling which they engender, the waste of precious time which they occasion, the unhallowed passions which they call into exercise, and all the other evils which follow in their train, they are criminal in their very nature ; for, in all games of chance there is the casting of the lot, in one form or another, and thus a solemn institution of God is degraded into a childish pastime.

It was not for a frivolous purpose that the Tarshish seamen resolved to cast lots, but to discover whose sins had occasioned this awful tempest, that means might be employed to avert impending ruin. And having taken this resolution, they carry it promptly into effect; for in the present alarming crisis there was no time to lose. In what manner they cast the lot, we are not informed; but it was cast fairly, and God, to whom they appealed, condescended to point out the true author of their sufferings; for “the lot fell upon Jonah.” We are not to expect, that God will always give a similar decision, whenever he is consulted in the same way. This case was extraordinary, like the danger that produced it, and is not to be drawn into a precedent, which we may copy. It is not for us to pry into the secret purposes of the Eternal, or attempt

to extort from him preternatural revelations. The path of duty is to be found by the light of his word, rather than by direct appeals to his providence : and though the lot may be used in various cases, to prevent strife, we have no warrant to employ it for detecting criminals, or discovering future events ; and were we to apply it unto such purposes, we could not be justified in expecting the same infallible decision which was given in the case of Jonah.

Great must have been the prophet's confusion, when he was marked out as a person obnoxious to the wrath of God, and when the eyes of all on board were fixed on him as the author of their dangers. He might have saved them the trouble of casting lots, by candidly acknowledging his guilt at the first ; but, as is usually the case, he would not confess his sin till he was compelled. Now, however, when he was detected by divine providence, he does not attempt to cover his transgression : his own conscience says to him, "Thou art the man ;" and he stands as a condemned criminal, humbled and confounded before God, and before his companions in peril. When he fled from the presence of the Lord, he had flattered himself, that his shameful dereliction of duty would be unknown to the strangers into whose company he might throw himself ; but he is sadly disappointed ; his guilt is publicly exposed, and he is covered with shame and confusion.

Doubtless there were others in the ship who in many respects were greater sinners than Jonah ; yet

be it is whom the storm pursues, and on whom the lot falls. God is more displeased with the sins of his own children and servants, than with those of the unregenerate; at least, his own people are more likely to feel the weight of his rod, when they presume to depart from him. Strangers may be left to themselves; but when any of his own family desert his service, he will take care to pursue them, and bring them back. "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and, having more mercies reserved for them, and more work for them to do, he will arrest their progress when they are wandering from his ways. And since their transgressions are more inexcusable than those of others, it is fit that, in bringing them back to himself, he should make them to taste the bitterness of sin: " You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."\* Yet let not the ungodly suppose, that the Lord will overlook their crimes. Does he expose the guilt of his own servants, and visit their sins with so much severity; and shall the wicked pass unpunished? Think not, careless sinners, that you can escape his justice: " God is angry with the wicked every day;" and, though he forbear with you for a season, " be sure your sin will find you out" at last, unless you repent. " His hand shall find out all his enemies, and his right hand shall find out those that hate him."†

Ver. 8. " Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us: what

\* Amos iii. 2: † Num. xxxii. 23. Psalms vii. 11. xxi. 8.

is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?"

Here we must again commend the conduct of the mariners. When the lot fell on Jonah, they did not forthwith attack him with abusive language, nor load him with execrations, nor talk of heaving him overboard, as the author of their sufferings; but they calmly inquire into his offence, his employment, and his country. Humanity must be shewn even to the worst of criminals; especially when their guilt has not been fully ascertained; and these men will do nothing to Jonah, until they have investigated the nature of his crime. They proceed, therefore, to question him on the subject; for, as he was a stranger to them all, they must learn the particulars of his guilt from his own mouth. As Achan, when the lot fell upon him, was exhorted by Joshua to give glory to God, by a full confession, even so is Jonah urged by the seamen to make an open acknowledgment of his sin.

The first question put to him seems to indicate, that they were not quite sure that he was the guilty individual; "Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us." "Art thou indeed the criminal whom the vengeance of Heaven is pursuing; or most we cast the lot a second time?" Perhaps the prophet's appearance and manner betokened unusual gravity and goodness, so that they were loath to believe him guilty of any flagrant crime, and were willing to think that the lot had fallen on the wrong person. But the passage may be better rendered; "Tell us, we pray

thee, for what cause, or on what account; this evil is upon us." The lot had marked him out as the criminal, and they wish to know the nature of his crime: "Wherefore is this tempest pursuing thee? What hast thou done to provoke the wrath of the Deity?"

Before Jonah has time to reply, several other questions are asked at him; the sailors being all eager to know the utmost concerning him. Some inquire after his employment; "What is thine occupation?" Some demand an account of the place where he had last resided, and had committed the crime; "Whence comest thou?" Others would know the place of his nativity; "What is thy country?" While others are desirous to learn to what nation or tribe he belonged; "Of what people art thou?" It was of importance for them to be acquainted with his profession, country, and religion; that they might have a better idea of the nature of his offence, and of the God whose anger he had awakened. Perhaps they suspected him to be some Chaldean or soothsayer, some eastern magician, who had provoked the Deity by presumptuous, cruel, or impious rites. Or they might fancy, that he was revolving in his mind some diabolical scheme, which he wished to execute at Tarshish; and that this was the reason why Heaven would not suffer him to proceed thither; a notion which his retiring below by himself might seem to countenance. At any rate, a knowledge of his history and character might help them to determine what was to be done with him, and by what means deliverance was to be sought.

Here let me remark, however, that men are too apt to form rash judgments concerning individuals, or conceive unworthy prejudices against them, on account of their country or extraction. Nothing can be more unreasonable, than to vilify and insult a person, because it has pleased Providence that he should be born in one spot of the earth rather than another. If a man does not make himself contemptible by his own conduct, never let him be despised for his country. Seamen, who have much intercourse with foreigners, should beware of speaking disrespectfully of any nation or tribe, and should never run down any person, because of the place of his nativity. Our high privileges as Britons, ought not to cherish pride, but gratitude; and while there are many nations who demand our compassion, we have no right to treat them with arrogance or contempt. All men are our brethren, partakers of the same nature with ourselves; for God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."\*

No less unwarrantable are the prejudices entertained against particular professions, and the antipathies too often found to exist between persons of different occupations. In every civilized country there must be people of various professions; some employed on the land, and some on the water; some pursuing one business, and some another; and, like the different

\* Acts xvii, 26.

members of the body, they all contribute in their several spheres to promote the general good: hence, as "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you," so men of one occupation have no right to vilify those of another. If a man's profession be lawful, and if he fulfil its duties with integrity and propriety, he need not be ashamed of it: and if any one count his own trade or employment more honourable than others, let him express his sense of its value, not by contempt for his neighbours, but by gratitude to God. The tendency of our holy religion is to break down every "wall of partition," to destroy all those animosities and prejudices which separate man from man, and to unite mankind into one grand and blessed family.

Ver. 9, 10. "And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? (for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.)"

Jonah had cause to be ashamed of his behaviour, but not of his extraction, his employment, or his religion; and he is ready, on these points, to give a satisfactory answer to the questions that were asked. In regard to his country, he was of no mean nation, for he was an Hebrew: not indeed a Jew, for he belonged to Zebulon, not to Judah; but an Hebrew, sprung from those great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. He was of that peculiar people, whom God had honoured above all nations; though his present conduct ill corresponded with his honourable birth. His profession was no less respectable; for he was a servant of the God of Israel, one of his prophets: "I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land." In these words, he declares at once his occupation and his religion; for indeed they were both the same: his religion was his business. Religion should be the chief employment of all mankind; but it is in a peculiar manner the business of God's ministering servants. Jonah was employed in fearing the Lord, that is, in honouring and serving him; both as one of his true worshippers, and one of his holy prophets, who ministered before him.

In giving this account of himself, Jonah not only replies to the questions of the captain and crew, but aims at their spiritual instruction. While he tells them his profession, he performs one of its important duties, by making known to them the glories of that God, whose he was, and whom he served: "I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land." The mariners had been crying every man unto his god, adoring dumb idols, the works of men's hands, or the creatures of their fancy: they had been calling on their numerous imaginary gods of the heaven, and gods of the earth; gods of the winds and clouds, and gods of the sea; for their notions of a Deity were mean and contracted: but Jonah tells them of the infinite Jehovah, who made the heaven.

and the earth, the sea and the dry land ; whose omnipotent arm supports the universe, and whose voice all nature obeys. He is the God of heaven, who holds in his hand the winds and storms ; the God of the sea, whose breath lifts up the swelling waves, and who alone can still them ; and the God of the dry land, which the affrighted mariners cannot reach but by his permission.

This description of Jonah's God not only serves to instruct the seamen, but to aggravate the offence of the rebellious prophet ; for, as we see in the tenth verse, he acknowledged with shame, that he had fled from the presence of this glorious Jehovah, who now sent a furious tempest to arrest him. Some think, that Jonah had mentioned his offence when he came on board, and that the sailors had then made light of it, and did not recollect it till now ; but the close of the tenth verse seems to be a supplement to the ninth, and speaks of what Jonah related now, rather than of any thing which he had said before : such supplements being not uncommon in the abridged narratives of scripture history. Had the mariners been previously informed of his crime, they would naturally have fixed on him, as the author of their trouble, without waiting for the decision of the lot : but Jonah had no inclination to confess his guilt till the lot fell on him. It was now, when he was condemned by the voice of Providence, as well as by his own conscience, that he humbly acknowledged his shameful behaviour, in deserting the service of his glorious God.

On hearing Jonah's confession, the mariners were struck with the utmost terror: they "were afraid" when the storm arose, but now they "were exceedingly afraid;" for they found, that it was indeed the messenger of divine vengeance, and that the God who sent it was vastly superior to any deity whom they had hitherto known. They said in their hearts; "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" "Who knoweth the power of his anger?"\* Conscious of their own guilt, particularly in their having just now rendered unto other gods the glory due to his name, they trembled at the thoughts of his wrath, of which they already felt the effects; being persuaded, that he whose anger pursued his own servant in a form so dreadful, would not fail to take vengeance on his enemies.

In the midst of their alarm, they expostulate with the prophet on the madness of his conduct: "Why hast thou done this?" "Why hast thou rebelled against thy God, and attempted to escape from him who made the sea and the dry land? What could tempt thee to awaken his indignation? And if thou wast resolved to brave his fury, why hast thou exposed us to the same perils? Had it not been for thee, instead of being surrounded with terrors, we might have been prosecuting our voyage in safety." To these expostulations Jonah could make no reply; he felt the justness of this rebuke, and received it in humble silence. When we have deserved reproof, let us not fly in the face of our reprovers, as if they were our

\* 1 Sam. vi. 20. Psalm xc. 11.

enemies; but rather thank them for their kindness in reminding us of our sins, and learn to profit by their salutary admonitions.

The seamen had good reason to complain of Jonah, for involving them in such awful dangers, by his rebellion against God. Little did he think, when he was embarking with them, what mischiefs he would occasion. In numerous instances, the effects of sin fall not on the sinner alone, but on all who are connected with him. Ungodly parents often entail misery and shame on their offspring; and, on the other hand, the crimes of children frequently bring down the gray hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave. In like manner, how often do we see wicked husbands, brothers, or friends, embittering the lives of their relations, or bringing them to ruin, by their vicious courses! How baneful are the fruits of sin! How wide the havoc which it causes, and the sorrows which it spreads, in families, societies, and states! We cannot abhor too much that abominable thing, so hateful to God, and so ruinous to man. Let us hasten to escape from this worst of enemies, by believing in that divine Saviour, who came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."\*

\* Heb. ix. 26. Titus ii. 13; 14.

## LECTURE IV.

### JONAH'S PUNISHMENT AND MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION.

#### Chap. I. 11—17.

Ver. 11, 12. “Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? (for the sea wrought and was tempestuous.) And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.”

The mariners had discovered the cause of their troubles; and this was an important point gained: but something more must be done to escape impending ruin; for the sea raged as much as before, and the fury of the tempest was not abated. A sense of our lost state is a good step towards salvation, but it is not salvation itself: and many have felt convictions of ~~the~~, who have relapsed into a fatal security, instead of fleeing from the wrath to come.

Since Jonah had fled from the service of his God, the seamen might naturally suppose, that the best way to obtain deliverance from their present dangers was to land him again at Joppa, or put him ashore on the coast of Syria or Cilicia, that he might return to his

work : but, not knowing what course to adopt, they ask advice at the prophet himself. By his honest confession, he had become his own accuser, and they are willing to make him his own judge ; especially as he might be expected to know, by the spirit of prophecy, what method ~~must~~ be taken to appease the wrath of his offended God. "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us ?" 'Must we return with thee unto Joppa ; or land thee on the nearest coast ; or inflict some punishment upon thee ; or proceed with thee to Tarshish, after offering up some sacrifice to thy God ? Tell us what is the will of God concerning thee, that we may hasten to comply with it, that so this tremendous storm may subside.'

Jonah's answer must have struck them with great surprise : "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea ; so shall the sea be calm unto you." Had he committed murder, or sacrilege, or some other flagrant crime, for which his life was forfeited by the laws of society, the most obvious remedy was to throw him overboard, that he might meet the punishment due to his guilt : but, as he had merely deserted his post, it might be hoped, that a speedy and penitent return to his duty might suffice ; or that a trespass-offering would be accepted for his sin. He assures them, however, that, in order to still the raging sea, they ~~must~~ cast him into the waves. As the storm was sent for him, it would not go off without him ; and they ~~must~~ throw him out as a sacrifice to its fury, before it can be appeased. This measure was not suggested by his own

mind, but by the Spirit of God, by whom he was now inspired; for, though he had fled from the divine presence, the Lord did not "cast him away from his presence, and took not his Holy Spirit from him." It was revealed to him from above, that the storm could not be quelled, till he was cast into the sea.

It is worthy of observation, that Jonah was not to leap overboard himself; as some have done in a fit of despair. Nothing can ever justify suicide; that heathen-daring sin, of which so many instances occur in the present day. The worst of criminals has no right to become his own executioner, and the most wretched creature on earth cannot be warranted in attempting to escape from misery by putting an end to his life; if indeed it can be called an escape from misery, to rush into the presence of an offended God, and brave the terrors of everlasting burnings. Jonah will not lay hands on himself; but he surrenders himself to justice, that the mariners, against whom, as well as against God, he had now sinned, might carry his sentence into execution. Having found him to be the cause of their danger, they must cast him forth, to procure their deliverance. It is this we must deal with our sins. When guilt has raised a storm in the conscience, we must not conceal nor spare the sins that produced it, but cast them from us; that they may no more break our peace, nor threaten to plunge us in perdition.

Jonah assures the mariners, that as soon as they should throw him overboard, the tempest would cease;

"So shall the sea be calm unto you." The same Spirit that suggested the plan proposed, enabled him to foresee the result with the utmost certainty. It is doubtful whether Jonah had any presentiment of his own wonderful deliverance; but, at all events, he was ready to submit to the decision of that God against whom he had sinned, whose ways are ever righteous and holy. He does not think it hard, that he should be thrown into the sea; for he was conscious that he deserved to be cast even into the bottomless pit, and punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Yet, as we find in the next chapter, he hideth himself to the mercy of his God, and was supported by the cheering hope, that whatever might become of his body, his soul would be safe. And, brethren, it is of small moment where we leave these frail bodies, if our souls are sure of landing safely on the heavenly shores. Though our mortal remains should be tossed about by the waves, or dissolved and scattered in the bottom of the ocean, our souls will not be the less happy in the regions of glory and immortality. Nay, even the bodies of believers, wherever they are deposited, are "sleeping in Jesus;" and when that day shall arrive, when "the sea shall give up the dead that are in it," all the saints whom it has swallowed up shall be raised in glory.

Instead of mourning at the decision of Providence, Jonah only exclaims against himself, for having, by his misconduct, involved the mariners in such trouble and alarm; and he tells them, that he well deserved

to be thrown into the ocean, since his guilt had nearly overwhelmed them in ruin : " Cast me forth into the sea ;—for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Like a humble penitent, he takes the whole blame upon himself, and wishes, if possible, to bear the whole loss ; being grieved to think, that these men should suffer for his transgression.

But what shall we say ? Did the mariners indeed suffer for Jonah's sin ? Does the righteous God punish the innocent along with the guilty ? " God forbid ! for then how shall God judge the world ?" Far be it from us to suppose, that God did them any injustice. They were innocent of Jonah's sin, which was the immediate occasion of the tempest ; yet they had sins of their own that deserved all that they felt, and much more ; and, though Jonah had never come on board their ship, God might have justly visited them with all this loss and trouble, for their own iniquities. Never let us think for a moment, that the Lord deals hardly with us, even when we are brought into afflictions and trials by the imprudence of others ; but always acknowledge, that he " hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve." " Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?" " It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."\* At his bar all must plead guilty. Yet, in this instance, as we shall see presently, judgment was mingled with rich mercy, and the mariners, instead of having any ground of

\* Ezra ix. 13. Lamentations iii. 22, 29.

complaint, had reason to praise God for all the dangers to which they had been exposed.

Ver. 13, 14, 15. “ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not; for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord; and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging.”

It was a most laudable humanity that prompted the mariners to attempt to save Jonah at the risk of their lives. They are so far from wishing to avenge themselves on the author of their troubles, that they are loth to cast him into the sea, though they are assured that this was essential to their own preservation. His ingenuous confession made them feel a greater interest in his safety; for such as are most humble and sincere have the strongest claims to compassion; and they rowed hard to bring the ship to land, willing to make the most strenuous efforts, to avoid the necessity of throwing him overboard. Perhaps they were at no great distance from the coast of Syria or of Cilicia; and they wished, if possible, to run the ship into some creek or harbour, with a view to set the prophet on shore. Those who are unacquainted with the construction of the ancient ships, will be surprised to hear of their rowing for that purpose; but it is well known, that the very largest ships of antiquity had oars as well as sails,

and the ships of war were rated according to the number of benches of oars which they carried. The mariners not only rowed, but "rowed hard," to reach the shore; yet all their efforts were in vain; "for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them." This was not the method appointed by God for their relief; and we must seek salvation, not in our own way, but in his. It is vain to contend with the Almighty, and attempt to subvert his plans. In proportion as the mariners strove with the raging sea, it strove the more violently "against them :" the tempest frowned in their face, and loudly proclaimed the madness of their enterprise.

Being thus reduced to the dreadful alternative, of either perishing themselves, or casting Jonah into the sea, they pray earnestly to God, that what was imposed on them by sad necessity, might not be charged to them as a crime; "We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." Here we perceive a happy change already wrought in these strangers, by God's dispensations, and the prophet's instructions: they no more invoke their idols, but call upon the Lord, the God of heaven and earth; whose mercy they humbly and earnestly implore. They knew that it was he who sent this awful tempest, and that none but he could still it; and that it was his prophet whom they were required to throw into the deep, as the only expedient that could save them: they pray, therefore, that the

Lord would not destroy them for taking away his life, nor charge them with the guilt of his blood ; and the doubling of their supplication, “ We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee,” is by no means a vain repetition, but expresses the extreme vehemence of their desires. They did not imagine, nor perhaps did Jonah himself, that God intended to spare his life ; and hence they consider their casting him into the sea as the same thing with killing him ; and shuddering at the thoughts of being accounted murderers, they fervently pray, that God would not impute to them the guilt of shedding innocent blood.

This great anxiety to be clear from innocent blood they had learned from the dictates of natural religion, which teaches men to abhor murder as one of the blackest crimes. Reason and conscience acknowledge the justice of that ancient law ; “ Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” Seamen, who know well what it is to be in danger, should set the highest value on the lives of all who sail with them ; and it is much to the honour of British seamen, that many of them have ventured their lives, with the most generous intrepidity, to save those who were perishing in the waters. Yet cases of an opposite description too frequently occur ; for instance, when one vessel has run down another at sea, those who have done the damage have been known to make off, and leave the sufferers to go to the bottom, rather than run the risk of being called to an account for the loss of the property. Against such barbarous murderers, for

that is their real designation, the mariners of Tarshish will rise up in the judgment, to condemn them. They could not bear the thoughts of shedding innocent blood, and they prayed earnestly, that God would not charge them with the blood of Jonah, when they were commanded and compelled to cast him into the sea.

The tokens of God's indignation against Jonah himself would make them the more afraid of incurring the guilt of murder; for they might justly conclude, that he who punished disobedience with such severity, would not fail to avenge innocent blood. Besides, a respect for the character of Jonah, as a prophet of the Lord, served to increase their anxiety: and their tenderness for his life strongly condemned the cruelty and impiety of persecutors in Israel, who about this period shed the blood of saints and prophets without remorse. Jezebel and others had hunted after the prophets of God with savage eagerness, to cut them off from the earth; but these strangers cannot lay hands on a minister of the Most High without the greatest reluctance, even when they are urged to it by unavoidable necessity.

In praying that they might not be accounted murderers, they humbly plead, that the course which they were constrained to pursue, was pointed out to them by God himself, so that in adopting it they were submitting to his own sovereign pleasure: "Lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." It was clearly the will of God, that Jonah should be thrown into the sea. He had sent

the storm in pursuit of his disobedient servant, had caused the lot to fall on him, had frustrated all their attempts to put him on shore, and had expressly commanded them, by Jonah's own mouth, to cast him forth, as the only expedient that could save them; and therefore, in having recourse to this expedient, they were evidently fulfilling the will of God, and could justly plead; “Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.”

All things are determined by the sovereign will of God. “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places.” “My counsel shall stand,” he says, “and I will do all my pleasure.”\* His pleasure often runs counter to our inclinations; and in such cases it becomes us to say, “The will of the Lord be done.”† It is far better that his will should be done, than ours: for we are sure that he does all things well, and he knows best what is for his own glory, and our real good. If he should determine that we, or any of ours, should sink in the waves, or experience any other disaster, we ought to anticipate such an event with sentiments of humble resignation; according to the words of Eli, “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good;” and those of Hezekiah, “Good is the word of the Lord;” and especially those ever-memorable expressions of Christ, “Not my will, but thine be done.”§

\* Psalm cxxxv. 6. Isaiah xlvi. 10. † Acts xxi. 14. § 1 Sam. iii. 18. Isaiah xxxix. 8. Luke xxii. 42.

It is proper to remark, however, that the principle on which these mariners acted must not be abused, to warrant the commission of sin, when it may seem necessary for our preservation. In throwing Jonah overboard, the mariners were obeying an express command of God, as well as following the special direction of his providence; and had they done it without this divine warrant, his blood might justly have been required at their hands. If the commission of murder, or any other crime, should seem requisite to preserve our lives, we must not suppose, that the perpetration of such a crime is submission to God's will. Never let us do evil, that good may come. Our situation may sometimes exempt us from the observance of positive institutions, for God has declared that he prefers mercy to sacrifice; but no circumstances in which we may be placed can ever dissolve moral obligation, or warrant the commission of crimes. It would be presumptuous to suppose, that the eternal rule of rectitude can be made to bend for our convenience, or our safety. If we are so placed that we must either sin or suffer, we ought not to hesitate a moment which to prefer. Let us steadily follow the path of duty, and leave the consequences, however terrible they may seem, to the disposal of a wise and gracious Providence. The Tarshish seamen, in resolving to cast the prophet into the deep, were not instigated by any suspicions or fears of their own; it was clearly the will of God, that they should act as the ministers of his justice towards his rebellious servant; and therefore, while they find

themselves compelled to this service, they will say, with a safe conscience, “Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.”

Having appealed to God, concerning the uprightness of their intentions, and the necessity that was laid upon them, they at last proceeded with reluctant hands to execute his will, by laying hold on Jonah, and casting him into the sea. He made no struggle to prevent them; nay, he had repeatedly urged them to this measure, as that which alone could save them. And no sooner is his sentence carried into effect, than they find, to their utter astonishment and unspeakable joy, the truth of his words: in an instant the swelling ocean subsides, the loud winds are hushed, the billows rage no more; and the vessel, that was just now tossed about by the fiercest tempest, enjoys a delightful calm, or feels nothing but a gentle breeze. “Just as when one who is pursuing a fugitive, and rushing after him with eager step, ceases to run whenever he apprehends him, and stands still, and holds fast his prisoner; even so the sea, which was raging violently before it got hold of Jonah, no sooner receives into its belly the object of its pursuit, than it rejects, is delighted, and grows calm for joy.”\* It is not uncommon for a storm to give place to a calm by slow degrees, but this change was instantaneous, like that produced on the sea of Gennesaret, when Christ rebuked the winds and waves, saying, “Peace; be still.” As the tempest arose suddenly at the call of God, even so at

\* Histories in Jonant.

his call it suddenly fell. Its object was gained, and it had nothing further to do: here its commission ceased. The Lord "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;" and when afflictions and trials have accomplished their ends, he hastens to remove them. As soon as the mariners comply with his will, their perils are over; the Lord sends them a speedy and glorious deliverance, calculated to make the strongest impression on their hearts.

Ver. 16. "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows."

The feelings of the seamen, when the horrors of the tempest suddenly vanished, may be better conceived than described: they were almost over-powered with mingled emotions of joy and gratitude, wonder and fear. They gazed on one another with looks of amazement; and were ready to exclaim, "What manner of God is this, whom even the winds and the waves obey! There is no other God who can destroy or deliver after this sort." They were beyond measure astonished, at the power and justice, the goodness and faithfulness, of the God of Israel; whose anger had so keenly pursued his offending servant, and whose almighty and gracious voice had rebuked the raging elements, and rescued the trembling mariners from destruction, as soon as Jonah was cast into the sea.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and such was that fear of God which the sea-

men felt, for it led them to adore and serve him as the true and living God. They “offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.” Perhaps they had some animal on board which they immediately proceeded to sacrifice unto God ; and though they were strangers to the temple service, and had no priest nor Levite to kill the sacrifice, yet, as they served God with upright hearts, and to the best of their knowledge, he was graciously pleased to accept their offering. Some think, however, that the expressions here employed are intended to signify, that the seamen offered sacrifice unto the Lord when they reached their port, having bound themselves to his service by solemn vows. Doubtless the spirit of gratitude and devotion that was kindled in their breasts, would give vent to itself in every possible way ; and if they had nothing else to offer unto God on board their ship, they would present the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise, while they vowed to render him more costly offerings as soon as they could find opportunity. Sensible that they owed their lives, and their all, to the mercy of Jehovah, they thought nothing too great to be offered to him ; and they cheerfully devoted themselves wholly to his service, each man being ready to say, “What have I to do any more with idols ? I will henceforth offer no sacrifice but unto the Lord alone, the God of heaven and earth and sea.” Nor was it merely in acts of religious worship that they vowed to serve the Lord ; they engaged to fulfil all his will, as far as they knew it, and resolved to seek an acquaintance with his law,

in order to obey it; especially as they had seen in the case of Jonah the bitter fruits of disobedience.

The gratitude of these Tarsish sailors is worthy of imitation. Every heart that is alive to generous feelings will be ready, in the hour of deliverance, to adopt the language of the psalmist; "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord: I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."\* It is fit that seamen, when they have escaped from imminent dangers, should bind themselves by solemn vows to serve their glorious Deliverer. If they have been addicted to swearing, drunkenness, or any other vices, let them resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to forsake them utterly: and, if they have neglected their bibles, their sabbaths, and other means of grace, let them engage to improve them with diligence, earnestly seeking, that the God who has preserved their bodies, may also save their souls. On arriving at their port in safety, they should seize the first opportunity of repairing to the house of God, to "offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving;" and, on such occasions, it is highly proper to express their gratitude with the hand, as well as with the mouth; according to the laudable custom of many seamen, who give something to the offerings of the Lord, for pious or charitable uses, when God has favored them with a prosperous voyage.

\* Psalm cxvi. 12, 13, 14.

Many make vows and resolutions in seasons of danger, which they forget as soon as the danger is over; but we may safely infer from what is here stated, that the Tarshish mariners were not so impious and ungrateful. Henceforth they served the God of Israel; and, on their next voyage to Joppa, they would make it their business to get better acquainted with his nature, his laws, and his ordinances, and with all the blessings and privileges which he confers on his servants. These were among “the sons of the stranger, that joined themselves to the Lord, and took hold of his covenant, to serve him, and to love his name;” and we may be sure, that he would “make them joyful in his house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices being accepted upon his altar.”\*

If these converts afterwards heard the news of Jonah’s deliverance, it would greatly strengthen their faith, and increase their joy. At any rate, they had reason to bless God that ever Jonah came on board their ship; for, though his presence had caused them much trouble and loss, the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, had made their dangers to become mercies, and their loss unspeakable gain. He would not suffer them to be losers by a servant of his, even though that servant was deserting him; and it is remarkable, that whereas the prophet had refused a commission to preach unto the gentiles, God made him the bearer of salvation to the gentiles, even in his attempt to escape. Some weak-minded

\* Isaiah lvi. 6, 7.

sailors have been afraid of taking ministers of Christ on board their ships ; but no superstition can be more groundless ; the servants of Jesus cannot be supposed to bring a curse with them, but a blessing. The mariners of Tarshish were made to bless the day when they took Jonah into their vessel ; and, we trust, they are now in heaven, magnifying the wonders of that gracious Providence which brought them salvation through Jonah's disobedience.

But what became of the poor prophet, whose death appeared to be their life, whose awful fate was their salvation ? He was indeed cast into the sea, but God did not leave him to struggle among the waves, or sink unto the bottom ; for it is added,

Ver. 17. " Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Though Jonah had expired in the waters, his soul would have been preserved, and safely landed on the shores above : but God had more work for him on earth, and therefore took care to preserve him alive. " The mariners must throw him into the deep, for the punishment of his disobedience ; yet the deep shall not overwhelm him : " The Lord chastened him sore ; but he did not give him over unto death."

The method which God employed for his preservation was truly remarkable. He did not make him to walk upon the waters, as Peter did for a short space ; nor enable him to escape by swimming ; nor throw some planks or boards in his way, on which he might

float ashore; nor cause some vessel to pass <sup>the</sup> by his pick him up: but he prepared a great fish to meet him; not to devour him as food, but to receive <sup>him</sup> alive into its bowels, and after detaining him <sup>for</sup> a season, to convey him safe to land. God has formed all the inhabitants of the deep, as well as all the tenants of the forest; and even the most bulky, the most rapacious, and the most ungovernable of their number, are wholly at his disposal. As the stormy winds fulfil his word, so do the fishes of the sea; and he who "made Leviathan to play therein," can employ him either to save or to destroy. "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." Having resolved, by this means, to save his life, he took care, in his wise and gracious providence, that a fish adapted for this purpose should now be in this part of the ocean; that it should be swimming after the Tarshish vessel which carried Jonah, attracted perhaps by the provisions which had been thrown overboard; that, at the moment when the prophet was cast into the sea, it should be ready to receive him; and that it should not bruise nor mangle his body, in the act of devouring him, but swallow him up whole, to be kept alive in its belly for a season, by almighty power.

It is uncertain in what kind of large fish Jonah was imprisoned and preserved, for the Greek word employed in Matthew xii. 40, and in the Septuagint version of this passage, though rendered *whale* by our translators, is as ambiguous as the Hebrew term here used. It merely denotes an animal of vast bulk; and there are

various sea monsters, besides the whale, to which the term may be properly applied.\* The throat of the common whale is too strait to admit a human body; so that, unless we suppose that this was a whale of an extraordinary species, or that its throat was remarkably enlarged for the occasion, we are led to believe, that the fish which swallowed Jonah belonged to some other tribe of the monsters of the deep. And perhaps there is no creature more likely to have been employed for this purpose than the *shark*. This most voracious fish is frequently of such a size as to be capable of swallowing a human body at once; and it often follows after ships, and greedily seizes any animal substances; however bulky, that may be thrown overboard.† No uncommon voracity can be no valid objection against this hypothesis, but rather tends to support it; for God displays his glory in accomplishing his works by agents which might be deemed the most unsuitable. When the Lord directed the fowls of the air to feed Elijah beside the brook Cherith, he did not make use of doves, but of ravens: and when the same prophet was to be supported at Zarephath near Zidon, he was not sent to the palace of a nobleman, nor to the mansion of some wealthy merchant, but to the cottage of a poor widow. It is therefore by no means unlikely, that

\* The Greek word ΧΤΩΞ does not seem to be restricted to denote a sea-monster only: Athanasius, an early Christian father, in speaking of Jonah, uses it with the epithet *marinæ*; from which we may infer, that it may be applied also to any hedge beast, or amphibious animal. Athanasi. *Synopeia Script. Sacra.*

† These remarks are particularly applicable to the *Squalus Carcharias*, or White Shark. See Shaw's *Zoology*, Vol. 5. p. 324, 325.

when God prepared a fish to receive and preserve his prophet, he would make choice of a shark, the most voracious of all fishes; as the miracle would thus be the more illustrious.\*

But whatever this large fish might be, God was eminently glorified in making it the instrument of Jonah's preservation. Not only did the prophet pass through its jaws unhurt, but he remained alive in its belly; he was not suffocated for want of air, nor was his flesh at all dissolved or injured by the fluids in the fish's stomach; for that God "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," supported him by almighty power, in a situation where no mortal had ever lived before. Had it not been for the exertion of this divine power, he would have died as soon in the stomach of the fish, as in the midst of the billows; and it would not only have been his prison, but his grave. Is there any thing too hard for the Lord? He made the waters of the Red Sea to retire before his people, and Jordan to run back towards its source; he made the lions tame like lambs in the presence of Daniel; and when the three noble youths were cast into the fiery furnace for his sake, he made them to walk at their ease in the flames, as if they had been walking in a garden. The same infinite power sustained the

\* I have taken no notice of a strange exposition of this passage contained in some of the *Fragments* annexed to a recent Edition of Calmet's Dictionary. Attempts to break down the miracles of scripture into common occurrences, at all times savour of impious presumption; and when such attempts are made by the most gross and absurd perversions of language, the disgust which they excite is mingled with contempt.

prophet in the fish's belly, where he could not see the light of heaven, nor breathe the vital air.

Had this miracle been intended merely for Jonah's preservation, he need not have been detained in the belly of the fish longer than the three young heroes remained in the fiery furnace; for a few minutes might have sufficed to convey him to the shore. But God, having other objects in view, kept him in his living prison for three days and three nights. By this detention, Jonah must be further tried and proved, under a dispensation made up of judgment and mercy; that while he is saved alive, as a monument of divine power and goodness, and reserved for further usefulness in the church and in the world, he may learn humility, gratitude, and devotion; and so be the better prepared for the duties of his ministry.

But the grand object of this detention was, to constitute Jonah an appropriate type, or representative, of our divine Redeemer. Even in his surrendering himself to be thrown into the sea, for the preservation of the mariners, the prophet was in some sort a type of that generous Saviour, who gave his life a ransom for many: much more did his imprisonment in the fish's belly represent the imprisonment of Christ in the dark mansions of the grave; and the duration of the one corresponded with that of the other. . . . However, when the cavilling enemies of Christ demanded a sign from heaven, he made them this reply; "An evil, and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet

Jonas: For, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly (or in the belly of the large fish), so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."\*\* In regard to the time here specified, it may be necessary to observe, that what we simply call *a day*, was more fully designated by the Jews *a day and a night*; and, in noting the number of those diurnal periods occupied by any transaction, they included parts of days, as well as the whole days. Thus the time that elapsed between the death of Christ and his resurrection, is termed "three days and three nights," though it consisted only of one whole day, with part of the day before, and part of the day after. We are not, therefore, to infer from the expression here used, that Jonah's imprisonment lasted three entire days, or seventy-two hours: perhaps he was not longer in the fish's belly, than Christ was in the state of the dead. The day seems to have been far spent ere the mariners were persuaded to cast Jonah into the sea; and he was probably released, like Christ, in the early part of the third day. There was no occasion to cut the time short, as far as it concerned the divine power; for that power could have sustained him forty days, as easily as forty hours: but we may reasonably suppose, that he who shortens the days of trouble "for the elect's sake,"† would hasten the release of his servant, as soon as the term of his confinement was long enough to prefigure the detention of Christ in the grave; in the same

\*\* Matthew xii. 38, 39, 40. † Matthew xxiv. 22.

manner as he hastened the resurrection of his dear Son, as soon as the appointed day began to dawn.

Brother, the whole bible is full of Christ; and were our minds duly enlightened, we might see his glory in every page. "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." They searched "what, or what manner of *time*, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."\* And the *time* of his resurrection was among the subjects predicted; for "he was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures."†

Seek, my friends, in reading the sacred word, to get acquainted with Christ, the only Saviour: for your bibles will do you little good, if they bring you not to him. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth:" Christ is the substance of the Gospel: "Christ is all and in all."§ Receive, then, by faith, this glorious Redeemer whom the gospel presents unto you; "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."† Behold the wonders of the Godhead displayed in his death and resurrection; and learn to glory in his cross.

May "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!"¶ To him be glory, now and for ever. Amen!

\* Acts x. 43. 1 Peter i. 10, 11. † 1 Cor. xv. 4. § Rom. x. 4. Col. ii. 10. iii. 11. † Rom. iv. 25. ¶ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

## LECTURE V.

### JONAH'S PRAYER IN THE FISH'S BELLY.

#### Chap. II. 1—6.

Ver. 1, 2. “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God, out of the fish's belly, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me ; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou hearest my voice.”

Many a prayer is contained in the book of God ; it records the devotions of saints on a great variety of occasions : but never was a prayer presented at the throne of grace in the same circumstances with that which we are now to consider. It was not sent up to God from the city or the field, from the hills or the valleys, from the woods or the plains ; it did not rise towards heaven from the shores of the ocean, nor from the face of the waters : but it ascended from the dark caverns of the deep, whither Jonah had been carried in his living prison. We have seen, in the former chapter, how Jonah, when he was thrown into the sea, was swallowed up by a great fish, which God had prepared for that purpose ; and how, instead of being suffocated or otherwise destroyed, he was miraculously

preserved in the belly of the fish : and here we find, that " behold he prayeth ;" and the place of his confinement is turned into a house of prayer, where he tastes the pleasures of devotion, and enjoys communion with the God of his salvation.

During the raging of the storm, Jonah was exhorted by the captain, to arise and call upon his God; but it is not said whether he prayed then or not : now, however, he prays fervently, and the substance of his address to God is recorded for our benefit. Truly it is an interesting prayer, whether we consider the occasion, the place, or the matter of it ; and, therefore it well deserves our most serious attention. We can never be placed in Jonah's situation ; yet his words may be of great service, by the divine blessing, to direct and encourage our supplications, in times of danger or affliction.

Prayer is a sweet relief to the troubled mind; and, as it is natural for the children of God to have recourse to their heavenly Father in all afflictive dispensations, such dispensations are frequently sent to draw them to a more intimate communion with God. And never was there a trial more calculated to produce this effect, than that of Jonah. When he found that, though his life was preserved, he was like one buried alive, a lone prisoner in his moving dungeon, excluded from the fellowship of the church, from all intercourse with the world, and from all the enjoyments of life ; nay, even from the light of day, and from the vital air ; no wonder that he should betake himself to prayer, and seek

to converse with God, when he could converse with none else. And what an unspeakable comfort was it for Jonah, that, when he was shut out from all living, he had immediate access to God! Though he seemed an outcast from the world, immured in the belly of the fish, and carried down to the bottom of the sea; though his eyes could not gaze toward heaven, and his voice could not float on the gale; yet he sends up his prayer to the Lord, with as much assurance of being heard, as though he had been in the temple at Jerusalem, or in his chamber at Gath-hepher.

Blessed be God! No barrier can be set up between us and heaven, but that which is raised by our sins. Persecutors have sometimes thrust the saints into gloomy dungeons, robbed them of all the sweets of society, and all the comforts of life; but they never could obstruct their way to the throne of grace, nor hinder in the smallest degree their intercourse with God. Brethren, amidst the wanderings of a sea-faring life, you may be carried to far distant corners of the world, remote from the society of your friends, and of the rest of mankind; you may be cast on desert islands, or inhospitable shores; but you cannot be banished from God, nor find any difficulty in approaching him with your prayers. Though Jonah had sunk to the very centre of the earth, even from thence his supplications would have ascended on high, and entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts. He felt Omnipotence sustaining him, and could not doubt that Omniscience observed him. In the belly of the fish,

and at the bottom of the ocean, he felt a present Deity ; and was not only supported by his power, but blessed with the tokens of his goodness.

Accordingly, he calls upon the Lord as *his own* God. Long had Jonah been acquainted with God, and experienced the riches of his love ; long had he served, and enjoyed him. He had chosen the Lord for his God, and taken hold of the promises of his covenant ; he had devoted himself to his service, both as a saint, and as a prophet : and though he had lately acted a part unworthy of his high character and privileges, yet now, when he was returning to God in humility and contrition, he felt an unspeakable satisfaction in claiming him as *his own*. And happy are they who have a God to resort to, in all their straits and anxieties ; who, when they are deprived of every thing else, are still possessed of that good part which cannot be taken away from them—an interest in God as the portion of their souls ! My brethren, you may experience sad reverses and disappointments ; you may lose your all in this world, as sailors often do ; but be of good cheer, you cannot lose your God. If you have by faith received him as *yours*, your best interests are safe : not all the storms that agitate the ocean, nor all the calamities that visit the earth, nor death itself, in whatever form it may come, can strip you of *your inheritance*.

While Jonah informs us that he prayed, he gives us the substance of his prayer, which he recollects and wrote down after his deliverance. . . . There can be

no doubt that, like most of the prayers recorded in scripture, it is given in an abridged form. He must have addressed his God on this occasion, at much greater length than what we have here: for it is natural to think, that, while he remained in his dark abode, he would spend most of his time in prayer and meditation; beguiling the lonely hours by the pleasures of devotion. But here is an abridgment of his prayer; consisting of affecting complaints, earnest supplications, and thanksgivings for begun deliverance.

That we have only a short compendium of Jonah's prayer, is evident from the first words here recorded, where he refers to petitions previously offered up; "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I; and thou hearest my voice." When the prophet speaks of having cried to the Lord on this occasion, he does not mean, that he addressed God with a loud voice, or even with an audible voice; for how could he use his voice in the belly of the fish? But he cried in his heart; he sent up to God the earnest desires of his soul. And in conveying our thoughts to the Omnipotent, it is not necessary to clothe our ideas with words, much less to employ loud cries, as if we would awaken him. He reads the language of the heart, he hears the voice of the soul, and understands the groanings which cannot be uttered. The expression which Jonah employs is merely intended to indicate the warmth of his desires: he prayed with great fervour, like one who cries aloud for deliverance. My friends,

if you are placed in circumstances where you cannot attempt to pray with an audible voice, nor even be put yourselves in a praying posture, still you may engage in genuine and lively devotion ; for prayer does not consist in uttering words, but in pouring out our hearts unto God.

It was Jonah's affliction that made him earnest in prayer : "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord." When he found himself swallowed up by the fish, he was justly alarmed at his awful state, and took himself to God in fervent supplications for deliverance : and now, in this prayer, which seems to have been uttered a little before his release, he reviews the alarm which he had felt, and the cries which his soul had sent up to God, by reason of his affliction. And truly his affliction was dreadful, and unprecedented : he "cried out of the belly of hell." He seemed to be in the belly of *the grave*, as this word is often rendered ; for the fish's belly would have been his grave, had he not been miraculously preserved ; and even now he was like one in the regions of the dead, pent up in the dark and narrow house. Nay, he seemed to be in the belly of *hell* itself, sunk into the abyss of woe, carried down into the unfathomable deep, as into the bottomless pit : his gloomy prison was like that abode of horror and despair, where men are utterly cast out from God, confined under his wrath in chains of darkness, reserved unto the blackness of darkness for ever. But, if Jonah's prison is counted an emblem of hell, because of its horrors, think, O my brethren, how dreadful

hell itself must be to the children of wrath! Too many make hell their by-word, and profanely talk of damnation as if it were a trifle ; but ah ! it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power! Never let the words of the scoffer and blasphemer come into your mouths, nor make light of the terrors of eternal vengeance. “The sinners in Zion are afraid ; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites : who among us shall dwell with devouring fire ? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?”\*

Yet, though Jonah seemed to be in the belly of hell, he was not denied access to heaven : however dismal the place of his imprisonment, there was no great gulf fixed between him and the throne of grace : for even out of the belly of hell he cried unto his God. Brethren, you may sometimes be placed in a situation which may be figuratively called “the belly of hell.” It is often the lot of godly seamen to be in company with a wicked crew, more like fiends than men, uttering the language, and breathing the spirit, of the powers of darkness : yet even from the belly of hell the children of God will lift up their cries to their heavenly Father ; and, amidst the disgusting conversation which assails their ears on earth, they will find a sweet relief in conversing with the Holy One of Israel.

Jonah’s prayer, sent forth from his dismal abode, found ready access to heaven ; and he records with gratitude the acceptance which it obtained ; “ I cried,

\* Isaiah xxxiii. 14.

unto the Lord, and he heard me ; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou hearest my voice." He was yet in the fish's belly ; but, feeling the power of God sustaining him, and experiencing in his soul the tokens of divine love, he has a pleasing assurance that his petitions were answered, and he gratefully acknowledges the loving-kindness of the Lord. His miraculous preservation was a sure token, that God had not cast him off, that he was still the object of his fatherly care and tender love, and that he was yet reserved for future service, to fulfil the purposes of his glory and grace ; and when he finds himself not only preserved, but blessed with a share of divine consolations, he is sure that his cries have been heard, he anticipates with joy his approaching liberation, and even in the belly of the fish his prayers are turned into praises. Indeed, that faith and hope which he exercised, and that serenity of mind which he enjoyed, in his unparalleled trial, were certain indications that God was with him, and that, though excluded from the light of the sun, he was still favoured with the light of God's countenance.

To magnify the riches of divine grace, Jonah proceeds, in the next verses, to describe his forlorn state, when he was cast into the sea, and swallowed up by the fish.

Ver. 3, 4. " For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas ; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

We are encouraged, in afflictions; to pour out our hearts unto God; laying before him all our anxieties and cares, our griefs and fears: and thus does the prophet spread out before God all the horrors of his singular case. He had no idea of giving God information; for who can pretend to instruct Omnipotence? but he sought to have his own heart affected with the magnitude of his trials, and the wonders of his deliverance. All our sorrows are perfectly known to God; but we must pour them out before him, that our hearts may be humbled and softened, and thus prepared for the return of his mercies. For this purpose, Jonah reviews the awful circumstances of his case; and paints them in the most lively colours.

The prophet imputes his trials to their proper author, and sees the hand of the Lord in all that befel him; "Thou hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas:—all thy billows and thy waves passed over me." The mariners had thrown him into the sea; but in reality God himself had cast him in, for they were only instruments in his hand, acting by his express direction. God had cast him into the deep; and the waters that covered him were God's billows and God's waves. Thus Jonah humbles himself under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt him in due time.

And great were the troubles into which the divine hand had brought him. He was cast into the deep; nay, into the midst of the seas: not into a place near the shore, but into the heart of the seas. This is

the meaning of the Hebrew phrase; and it is thought, that Christ alludes to it, when, in reference to Jonah's history, he speaks of being three days and three nights in the *heart* of the earth. Jonah was not left to float on the waves, but was carried down to the bottom, where the floods of the ocean surrounded him, while the waves rolled over his head: "The floods compassed me about; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me."

Here it is very observable, that Jonah quotes the words of David in the seventh verse of the forty-second Psalm, where it is said; "Deep calleth unto deep a the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me:" which last words, in the original Hebrew, are exactly the same with those which occur here, although they vary a little in the translation. The psalmist spake them in a figurative sense, but they were applicable to Jonah's case even in their literal meaning; for not only did the waves trouble and sorrow and fear now roll over him, but the fierce billows of the ocean, under which he was buried alive. Jonah could not read his bible in the belly of the fish; but it was well for him that he had diligently perused it when he had opportunity, so that his mind was stored with its precious truths, which now yielded him consolation and support. There are seasons when God's people experience, in a peculiar manner, the value of an intimate acquaintance with his word. Neglect not, my brethren, to read the holy scripture while you have opportunity: the time may come when

you shall be denied this blessed privilege; and you will then find the vast importance of having your memories replenished with the sweet promises, and cheering doctrines, of the gospel of Christ. Those who make the bible their companion in the season of health, will find it to be their support in the hour of tribulation.

When Jonah seemed ready to be overwhelmed by the waves of the sea, and the more dreadful billows of divine wrath, he began to despair: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight." He expected, that the belly of the fish would be his grave: that he should no more look up to the heavens, where God has his throne; nor see that holy temple, and holy land, where the emblems of his presence abode. Nay, he seems to have been seized for a time with alarming anticipations of eternal wrath, and to have considered his being cast into the sea, as an earnest of his being cast out of God's sight into the gulf of wo, banished for ever from his presence. He said; "I am cast out of thy sight;" and what can be conceived more tremendous, than to be expelled from the Source of all good; whose eternal presence is heaven, and whose eternal absence is hell! It is not inconsistent with God's love to his children, to permit them to entertain such gloomy thoughts for a season: he leaves them to walk in darkness, that their joys may be the sweeter when the light returns. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." And Asaph indulged in the same melancholy thoughts;

"Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"\*

What then? "Hath God cast away his people?" Will he leave his servants a prey to despair? God forbid. "His anger is but for a moment: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." In the case of Jonah, as well as in the instances now quoted, we see the dark clouds quickly dispersing and a ray of celestial light, darting through the gloom, to cheer the forlorn wanderer: for the language of despondency is quickly succeeded by that of hope: "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Supported by the power of his God, and feeling the tokens of divine goodness, the prophet recovers his faith and hope, and gradually obtains sweet tranquillity of mind, in the view of returning to the full enjoyment of his privileges. His situation indeed, was dismal in the extreme; and, to the strict sense, deliverance was impossible; yet, "against hope be believed in hope," being fully assured, from what he now felt, that God would not only bless him with everlasting life, but restore him, for a season, to the church on earth.

The manner in which this doomsday expression demands our particular attention. The man of God does not say, "I shall again behold the light of day";

\* Isaiah xlii. 14. Psalm xxviii. 7; 37. 2d.

or, "I shall set the face of my dear friends;" or, "I shall return to my house, at Gath-hepher;" but he says, "I will look again toward thy holy temple." Here you see the spirit of the true saint: he counts the service of God his grand business, and chief pleasure: his heart is in the sanctuary; and thither he will direct his eyes, and his fountains, as soon as he is delivered from danger or affliction. When good Hezekiah, in his sickness, begged for a sign to assure him of his recovery; he did not ask, "What is the sign, that I shall again walk in my gardens, or pleasure-ground?" or, "What is the sign, that I shall be able to take a ride through the city, or a journey into the country?" But his question was, "What is the sign, that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?"\* for this was the first place to which he would repair, when his sickness abated. The words of Jonah breathe the same spirit: "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Brethren, when the Lord has preserved you from many woes, or afflictions, you should embrace the first opportunity of appearing, in his courts, to give him the glory due unto his name. Too many sailors, when they have escaped from perils and hardships, no sooner set their foot ashore, than they hasten to scenes of dissipation and vanity, as if they were eager to insult the God who has delivered them; but the pious seaman will resemble, like Jonah, to take the earliest opportunity of visiting the house of God; to praise him for all his mercies, to learn his holy will, and seek the blessings of his grace.

\* Isaiah xxxviii. 22.

Yet Jonah is not sure that he could reach 'God's holy temple'; he speaks only of looking towards it. It does not appear that he was allowed to go to Jerusalem, immediately after his deliverance; for he was despatched without delay to Nineveh. But if he could not bend his steps towards the temple, he would, at least, direct his eyes thither; and, like Daniel, he would pray with his face towards Jerusalem, to testify his love for the sanctuary, and for its blessed institutions. When he fled to Tarshish, he turned his back on the temple, but now he would set his face towards it; like those penitents of whom it is said; "They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."\*

My friends, when you cannot come to the house of God, let your desires go forth towards it, like those of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. Especially, let your hearts ascend towards his holy temple in the skies. To this glorious temple Jonah resolved to lift up his eyes; and perhaps he speaks here of this heavenly temple, rather than of its type at Jerusalem; for into this temple he sent his prayer, as he speaks in the seventh verse, and thither his warmest affections rose. "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven:"† and, blessed be his name! he hears the prayers, and accepts the praises, that are sent up thither in faith and in love, from any quarter of the earth or of the sea. Happy

\* Jeremiah i. 5. † Psalm xi. 4.

are they who can say, in the language of the prophet, “The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee: With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.”\*

Veres 5, 6. “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head: I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.”

In these words, Jonah gives a further description of his fears and his hopes, his sufferings and his consolations. His condition was truly terrible. The waters of the ocean surrounded him; nay, they seemed to come into his very soul; for his soul was sinking amidst the waves of trouble, which threatened to overwhelm him: “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.” He seems to allude to another passage in the Psalms; “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.”† The book of Psalms presents such a rich variety of passages, relating to the experiences of the saints, that there is perhaps no portion of scripture better adapted to refresh and comfort the children of sorrow.

The case of Jonah appeared altogether hopeless: “The depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head: I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars, was about

\* Isaiah xxvi. 8, 9. † Psalm lxix. 1.

me for ever." He was carried down by the fish to the lowest caverns of the ocean, where he was enclosed on every side by the waters of the deep. Sometimes his living prison was lying among the rank sea-weed, part of which might be swallowed by the fish, and wrapped round the prophet's head, within its stomach. Thus he was imprisoned at the very foundations of the mountains, in the darkest and deepest caverns; and there seemed to be no prospect of release, when the earth, as well as the sea, shut him in on all sides, with everlasting bars. To all appearance, there was no probability of his ever ascending from these low and dismal regions, till that period when the sea shall give up the dead which are in it.

In these strong colours does Jonah paint the horrors of his situation, that he might magnify the wonders of God's power and grace, manifested in his glorious deliverance: and this deliverance he proceeds to celebrate in the following words; " Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." Some expressions in this prayer, of which this is one, look as if they had been added after Jonah's release; yet he might use these words, even in the fish's belly; for there his life was preserved from corruption, or from the pit, as the original term is; his soul did not sink into the pit of wo, nor pass into the state of the dead; nor was his body dissolved and corrupted in the stomach of the sea-monster, as might have been expected. Jonah, therefore, as a type of Christ, might apply to himself the prophetic words of David; "Thou wilt not

Leave my soul in hell; neither will thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.\* Already his deliverance was begun, and he enjoyed the most cheering anticipations of its being speedily and fully realized: and hence he feels himself constrained to begin the song of praise, and to admire the wonders of delivering goodness: " Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." Perhaps he perceived that the fish was now ascending from the deep recesses to which it had conveyed him, and was approaching the shore where he was to be safely landed: and if this was the case, his hopes would be the more lively, and his praise the more warm.

There was one consideration that peculiarly encouraged the prophet's hopes, and enlivened his thanksgivings;—he had a pleasing assurance that the Lord was his God; and under that endearing character he now addressed him. There is nothing so much calculated to support the believer in times of trial, as his interest in God. This is the most powerful antidote to despondency. With this the psalmist once and again encouraged his heart, when it was in danger of sinking; " Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."† In this the prophet Habakkuk determined to rejoice, though all other comforts were extinguished, and all other sources of joy dried up; " Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall

\* Psalm xvi. 10. Acts ii. 31. †Psalms xlii. 11. xliii. 5.

fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”\* Jonah, in like manner, could rejoice, even in the belly of the fish ; because the Lord was his God, so that he had nothing to fear.

My dear brethren, seek to have the Lord for your God ; and then, wherever you are, and however you may be situated, you will possess a never-failing source of consolation. We must be safe, if the Lord be our God. “ What shall we then say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ?—Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”†

\* Hab. iii. 17, 18. † Rom. viii, 31, 35, 37, 38, 39.

## LECTURE VI.

### JONAH'S PRAYER CONTINUED.—HIS DELIVERANCE.

#### Chap. II. 7—10.

Ver. 7. “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.”

When Jonah was cast into the sea, and devoured by the fish, he was at first seized with extreme agitation and terror: his spirits sunk, his courage failed, his soul fainted within him; he thought himself cast out of God's sight, doomed to bear the fierceness of his wrath, in the belly of hell. And it is not surprising that the prophet's heart should faint; for his situation was perhaps the most frightful in which any of God's children has ever been placed. The state of Daniel in the den of lions is somewhat analogous to it; but Daniel was not in a lion's belly, he still breathed the vital air. The case of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace was peculiarly terrible; but they were only a few minutes in the flames; and, instead of being carried down into the bowels of the earth, or to the bottom of the deep, they were still within view of their fellow-men.

Yet, however dismal the case of Jonah, it was not desperate. The Son of God walked with the three noble youths in the midst of the fire ; and he also accompanied Jonah in the midst of the waters, and poured out upon him the spirit of grace and of supplications, even in the dark ~~prayer~~ of the deep, and in the belly of the fish. Here the light of Jehovah's countenance beamed on his soul ; for, when it faints within him, he remembered the Lord; and the remembrance of his name brought him rich consolation, and firm support. He thought on the goodness and mercy, the strength and faithfulness, of the God of Israel; he recollects the wonders of his power and grace, which he had wrought for his people in the days of old; he called to mind the promises of his covenant, and the riches of his salvation; and he reflected also on what God had already done for himself on manifold occasions. Thus he remembered the Lord; and his ~~prayer~~ <sup>his pre-ditations</sup> on him were sweet and refreshing. In this manner was David supported, when his heart was ready to fail; "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living :" and by the same means did Asaph get rid of his despondency; "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High: I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old: I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings."\*

It is evident that the prophet, as well as the

\* Ps. xxvii. 13. lxxvii. 10, 11, 12.

psalmist, does not speak of a bare recollection of God, but of such a remembrance of him as encouraged him to trust in God, and to offer up before him the prayer of faith : for he adds ; "and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." He remembered the Lord as the God of his salvation, a sure refuge in the hour of trouble ; and he therefore fled to him for relief, and called on his name in earnest prayers and supplications. From his deep and gloomy dungeon he sent up his prayer, as a swift messenger to heaven, directing it to God's holy temple, even to his throne of grace.

But these words not only inform us, that Jonah sought relief in devotion, but that his supplications found acceptance with God ; "my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." The messenger which he despatched to heaven for relief, quickly arrived there, and was graciously admitted into the presence of God : he sent his prayer to God's holy temple, and it found ready access. The prayers of the saints, in those times, were directed towards the temple at Jerusalem, where God, the hearer of prayer, dwelt between the cherubim ; and thither Jonah resolved to look, as we have seen in the fourth verse : but here he rather speaks of God's holy temple in the skies, where his throne of glory and grace is erected, and where he hears and answers the supplications of his children. Thither did Jonah's prayer ascend ; and, from the tokens of the divine power and goodness which he now felt, and the pleasing hopes with

which he was inspired, he was sure that it was not rejected : it had entered God's holy place, and quickly brought back a gracious answer. This the prophet mentions, for the further encouragement of his faith and hope, and at the same time to magnify the Hearer of prayer, for all the riches of his infinite grace. He might have expected that, as he had refused to listen to the voice of God's commands, so the Lord would refuse to hearken to the voice of his supplications ; but now he acknowledges with joy and gratitude, that the Lord had not dealt with him after his sins, nor rewarded him according to his iniquities : and he is ready to say, with the psalmist ; "Verily God hath heard me ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."\*

Verse 8. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."

Here the prophet confesses the folly of relinquishing the service and enjoyment of God, for the pursuit of vanities. This was his own crime ; but his confession is expressed in general terms, that it might be more useful unto others : "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."

Jonah appears to allude to the worship of idols ; for though he had not run into idolatry himself, he had just been witnessing the idolatrous worship of the mariners, when they cried every man to his god ; and, on this occasion, he had seen the folly of their services,

\* Psalm lxvi. 19, 20.

and the vast advantage of knowing and seeking the true and living God. Idols are justly termed *vanities*; not only because they are foolish and useless gods, whose service is vain and unprofitable; but because they have no real being, but are vanity and nothing, existing only in the vain imaginations of their blinded votaries. “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.” Accordingly it is said; “Are there any among the *vanities* of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” “The stock is a doctrine of *vanities*.” “They are *vanity*, and the work of errors.”\* With equal propriety are they stiled *lying vanities*; for all that seek them shall find themselves deceived; all that worship them in the hope of deliverance, shall be utterly disappointed, as the mariners were when they cried unto their gods. The prophet, therefore, declares, that “They who observe, or worship, such *lying vanities*, forsake their own mercy.” They act in direct opposition to their own interest; they turn away from all the mercies of the covenant, which are placed within their reach that they may accept them as their own; nay, they forsake God himself, the Father of mercies; and thus they exclude themselves from the very fountain of all goodness.

But idols are not the only vanities which men pursue in opposition to God. Numbers are led away by their own vain imaginations, instead of being guided by his holy will; and numbers follow the

\* 1 Cor. viii. 4. Jer. xiv. 22. x. 8, 15.

vanities of the world, instead of seeking him as the portion of their souls. Jonah had preferred the dictates of his own fancy to the commandments of God; but he found to his cost, that nothing can be more preposterous, than to think of bettering ourselves by forsaking God. His foolish schemes had tortured out to him lying vanities, that deceived him, and well nigh ruined him: so that he acknowledges, to God's honour and his own shame, that he hath brought all this trouble upon himself. In deserting his God, he hath forsaken his own mercy: that mercy which he had often tasted in God's service; that mercy which is held out to sinners in the gospel, and is secured to believers by all the promises of the covenant.

Equally foolish is the conduct of those who pursue the vanities of the world, in preference to the service and enjoyment of God. For a time they may fancy, like Jonah, that their way is prosperous, that they shall have peace, though they walk after the imaginations of their own hearts, and shall meet with the pleasure among the enjoyments of time; but alas! the objects of their pursuit are all lying vanities, which flatter for a time, to deceive and to destroy. Often they elude the grasp of their pursuers; often, when they seem to be attained, they presently make themselves wings, and flee away as an eagle towards heaven; and even when they remain, they never yield their possessors the joys which they promised, but load them with anxiety and care; nay, if mercy prevent not, they delude them to their eternal ruin. This

is the proper character of the riches, the pleasures, the employments, the honours, of the present life ; they are all lying vanities. The wisest of mankind made trial of them all, and he records the result of his experience in those memorable words ; " Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity." Truly they are lying vanities, that cheat the soul, and would rob it, not only of present comfort, but of everlasting felicity.

Why then, brethren, should we act so madly as to forsake our own mercy, in quest of such lying vanities ? Why should we turn away from the God of mercy, and spurn at the offers of his love, for the sake of such deceitful, such pernicious enjoyments ? It is indeed amazing, that any of the children of men should be so blind to their own interests ; but it is much more amazing, that this should be the perverse choice of mankind in general ! " Be astonished, O ye heavens at this, and be horribly afraid ; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For ye people have committed two evils ; they have broken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."\* What do you see in the world, O ye children of men, that for the sake of its lying vanities you would forfeit eternal life, and madly expose yourselves to everlasting burnings ? Fools ! when will ye be wise ? Is not the voice of the gospel the voice of mercy ? Why do you turn a deaf ear to the invitations of love, and listen only to the siren voice of deceitful pleasure ? What is there in the call of God that excites your avar-

\* Jeremiah ii. 12, 13.

sion? Does he say any thing to offend, or to injure you? Does he demand any thing unreasonable, or severe? No: he brings his mercy near you: he only forbids you to be miserable; he only commands you to be happy. O that you would forsake your ~~own~~ mercy no more; but listen to the voice of heavenly wisdom, intreating you to accept of real and solid bliss. "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children; ~~for~~ blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the ~~man~~ that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth, ~~and~~ findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord: But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death."\*

Verse 9. "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

Having confessed the folly of regarding lying vanities, to the neglect of God, and of our best interests, Jonah resolves, that he will no more engage in such preposterous attempts, but faithfully adhere unto the God of his salvation. The Lord had spoken ~~unto~~ to his soul, and he must not turn again to such ~~egregious~~ folly. If others continue to observe lying vanities, he will not follow their example; but will render ~~unto~~ to God the glory due to his name; "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed."

\* Proverbs viii. 32-36.

Jonah expressed a hope, that he should look again towards God's holy temple ; and here he states what he would do in the temple : he will offer sacrifices with the voice of thanksgiving, and pay his vows. Gratitude to God is one of the first emotions of a generous mind in the hour of deliverance : and Jonah resolves to express his gratitude, by presenting to God those free-will offerings, which his law prescribed or allowed as acknowledgments for his mercies. These sacrifices he will offer "with the voice of thanksgiving ;" that, while the smoke of the victims, and the odours of the incense, ascended towards heaven, his praises might also ascend before the Lord, like a sweet perfume.

Even thanksgiving itself is a sacrifice ; and perhaps the prophet intimates, that this would be the chief sacrifice which he would present. It is indeed a better sacrifice than that of slain beasts, as God himself testifies in these memorable words ; " Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.—Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me : and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God."\* This is our gospel sacrifice, which, like the incense under the law, we must still offer up every morning and evening ; according to the apostle's exhortation ; " By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks

\* Psalm l. 13, 14, 15, 23.

to his name."\* This spiritual sacrifice is what the psalmist chiefly engaged to offer, when, like Jonah, he had experienced the riches of God's delivering goodness; and here, as in other passages, the prophet seems to borrow some of the psalmist's words; "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.---I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord, and will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people: In the courts of the Lord's house; in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. . . . Praise ye the Lord."†

Yet offerings of slain beasts were then necessary in the service of God, as expressions of guilt, and emblems of the great atonement which was to be made in the fulness of time, that "one offering" which "had been perfected for ever them that are sanctified"; § and Jonah, who was himself an eminent type of Christ, did not neglect to offer, with his thanksgivings, those sacrifices which prefigured the great propitiation. . . . this also he would resolve to imitate the psalmist, who says in another place; "I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows; which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats."‡ Jonah perhaps could not afford to offer such costly victims, yet he would not appear

\* Heb. xiii. 15. † Ps. cxvi. 12, 13, 17, 18, 19. § Heb. x.

‡ Ps. lxvi. 13—15.

before the Lord empty ; he would bring his sacrifice to the altar, as an acknowledgment of his guilt, an expression of gratitude, and an intimation of his reliance on God's pardoning mercy, vouchsafed through the blood of atonement.

Like the psalmist in the passages quoted above, Jonah resolves to pay his vows, while he offered his sacrifice. The mariners made vows on occasion of their deliverance ; and the prophet made vows also, either amidst the raging of the storm, or in the fish's belly ; and now, in the prospect of his speedy release, he resolves to pay that which he had vowed, as well as to sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving. Perhaps the matter of his vows consisted of sacrifices, as appears to have been the case with the psalmist ; for the saints of old frequently bound themselves by vows to offer certain oblations before the Lord ; and hence we often find the name *vows* applied in scripture to these oblations themselves, which the offerers were bound to present, not by any express law, but by their own voluntary engagements. Whatever vows of this description Jonah had made, he now solemnly ratified in the presence of God. Or, if his vow were of another kind ; if he bound himself to run off no more from the service of God, but go to Nineveh, or whithersoever the Lord might send him ; or if he came under any other engagements to God, he renews and confirms them all, in this devout prayer ; resolving that he will not neglect in the season of deliverance, to perform what he had promised in the hour of trouble.

And truly, our hearts are so treacherous, and we are so apt to turn aside from God, that we cannot bind ourselves too firmly to his service, nor renew our engagements too frequently. Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, and never forget our vows and obligations. If we are careful to fulfil our engagements with men, how much more should we pay our vows unto the Lord? Especially as the services which we are called to promise him, are all conducive to our own interests. The more we fulfil our God, the more we profit ourselves: and when we vow to serve him, we are binding ourselves to do what is not only our duty, but is most for our safety, our comfort, and our honour.

While Jonah resolves to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving after his deliverance, he begins to render praise unto God even in the fish's belly, in the view of the approaching liberation; for he closes this prayer by extolling the Lord as the God of his salvation: "Salvation is of the Lord." These words again remind us of some expressions in the book of Psalms, particularly the conclusion of the third Psalm; where it is said, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." That Psalm, like Jonah's prayer, was composed in a season of great trouble and imminent danger; on which occasion, David, betaking himself to God as his refuge, confides in him as the only author of his salvation, and resolves to give him all the glory of that deliverance which he hoped for. And here the prophet imitates his example, declaring, to the honour of God, that whereas

all other refuges are but lying vanities, he is the God of salvation, and in that character is worthy of all blessing and praise : according to the words of the psalmist in another passage ; “He that is our God is the God of salvation ; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”\* It was he that prepared the fish to receive Jonah ; it was he that preserved him alive in its belly, and cheered him there with divine consolations ; it was he that supported him with pleasing anticipations of deliverance, which his own almighty arm was presently to work : and therefore he will ascribe to him honour and praise and glory, by declaring with joy and gratitude, that “Salvation is of the Lord.”

With these words Jonah ended his prayer ; and the deliverance which he anticipated, and for which he magnified the Lord, was then just at hand, and perhaps was wrought for him at the very moment when his prayer was concluded : for the account of his wonderful release immediately follows.

Verse 10. “And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”

Scarcely was the prayer of Jonah ended, when the hopes which he had expressed were gloriously realized, the arm of the Lord being stretched out for his deliverance. His petitions were presented in faith, and they succeeded accordingly. “If any of you lack wisdom,” or any other blessing, “let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ;

\* Psalm lxviii. 20.

and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering : for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed." How strongly are we encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace ; where the glorious Heater of prayer sits to receive our petitions, and waits to be gracious. " The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availleth much."\* The prayers of Elias, who " was a man subject to like passions as we are," shut heaven, and opened heaven ; Daniel's prayer " stopped the mouth of lions;" and the prayer of his three friends " quenched the violence of fire :" and, in like manner, Jonah's prayer obtains his release from the jaws, nay from the stomach, of a frightful sea-monster. We are not to look for miracles in answer to our prayers ; yet we are warranted to expect great things from the inexhaustible bounty and rich grace of redeeming God : " Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."†

The prophet's deliverance was as miraculous as his arrest, and his imprisonment : " The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." By the exertion of divine power, the fish which Jonah had so long been detained, is made deliver up its prisoner in safety. For this purpose " the Lord spake unto the fish." This remarkable expression may denote the ease with which this mighty work was effected : for as, at the creation of the world

\* James i. 5, 6. v. 16, 17. † Matthew vii. 7.

God “spake, and it was ; he commanded, and it stood fast;” so now, he needed only to speak the word, and the thing was done. The phrase also intimates the complete sovereignty of God over the inferior creatures : they are wholly at his call ; so that he “says to one, Go ; and it goeth ; and to another, Come ; and it cometh.” He commanded the ravens to feed Elijah ; and the lions to spare Daniel : he sent forth the tempest to arrest Jonah, and prepared the fish to apprehend and imprison him ; and now, when the ends of his imprisonment are served, an order is issued for his release, and is instantly obeyed. Influenced by an unseen power, the fish rises from the bottom of the deep, advances towards the shore, and running perhaps into some creek, where it was most convenient for the prophet to get on shore, throws him out safe upon the beach. He who made the fishes of the sea, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, can at any time employ them for the purposes of his glory, and make them obedient to his will. Their dutiful submission, and their punctuality in answering the ends of their creation, we find brought forward as a reproach to man : “ The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” “ Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.”\* The ready obedience of the fish furnished a lesson for the disobedient prophet.

\* Isaiah i. 3. Jeremiah viii. 7.



On what part of the shore of the Mediterranean Jonah was landed, we are not informed; but it was most probably on the Syrian coast, somewhere about the place that is now called the bay of Scanderoon: for, as he was forthwith to set out for Nineveh, his kind God would bring him to land, at a spot from whence he could most conveniently proceed on his journey. It is not unlikely, that even the fish which had the honour of being the instrument of his preservation, shared on this occasion in the goodness of God; and that, instead of being made to run ashore and perish, it was permitted, after delivering its charge, to return safely to its mansions in the deep.

It is of much more importance to observe, that, as Jonah's confinement was a type of Christ's burial, so was his deliverance a type of Christ's resurrection. Three days was the prophet entombed in his living grave, and on the third his grave was opened, at the command of God, and he came forth with joy and glory to the light of life: three days the Saviour lodged in the dark regions of the dead, and on the third his tomb was thrown open, by an order from heaven, through the ministry of angels, and he rose to life in glory and triumph. The tomb of Jesus, like that of Jonah, was one in which never man had lain: and as Jonah emerged from his dismal abode unhurt and joyful, ready to fulfil his ministry among the heathen at Nineveh; so did our Lord arise uninjured by the grave, freed from the effects of his Father's wrath, and prepared to publish salvation to the gentiles.

Brethren, while we view this memorable emblem of the resurrection of Jesus, let our hearts rise toward the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Why should we cleave to sublunary things, and neglect that exalted Saviour, to whom the prophets all bear witness, and in whom alone is all our salvation? His glory is set forth in the divine word; that we may believe in his name, and rejoice in his blessings; and the wonders now wrought for Jonah may well encourage our faith and hope, since they furnish a display of his power and grace towards helpless sinners. As Jonah was brought forth from his gloomy dungeon, to rejoice in the blessings of life, even so, if we flee to Jesus for refuge, he will bring our souls out of darkness to the light of life, and fill us with joy and peace in believing; nay, our bodies also, though they must lie for a time in darkness, shall at last be raised to everlasting light, by his almighty power. The prophet's release from his living grave, not only prefigured the resurrection of Christ himself, but that of his people: for, as his grave was commanded to deliver him up in safety, so shall the grave of every believer, whether on land or at the bottom of the sea, be commanded to surrender him up, and he shall come forth, at the call of Christ, not only, alive, but clothed with glory and immortality. "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."\*

\* Philippians iii. 21.

## LECTURE VII.

### JONAH'S MINISTRY AT NINEVEH.

#### Chap. III. 1—4.

Ver. 1, 2. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

The book of Jonah is one of the shortest in the sacred volume, yet it abounds with striking events, displaying in a variety of ways the glory of the Lord. In the former part of the book, we have met with several of the wonders of his power; now we are about to contemplate the wonders of his grace: and we shall find the latter, like the former, manifested towards the heathen, as well as towards the prophet himself.

Jonah had disobeyed the voice of the Lord, and deserted his service; and hence it might naturally be supposed, that the word of the Lord would come to him no more, and that he would not again be employed in that honourable work, which he had shamefully abandoned. It is enough for the unfaithful servant to be pardoned; he must not hope to be trusted and patronized: and we might naturally expect to hear, that

Jonah's commission, of which he had proved himself so unworthy, must be taken from him, and transferred to another. But "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways : for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts."\* He does not dismiss his servants for ~~the~~ offence; nay for many offences ; and even such as have run off from his service he kindly restores to their place, and loads with his benefits. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time," renewing his commission ; and thus not only sealing his pardon, but encouraging him to hope for a blessing on his ministry, notwithstanding his recent disobedience. Perhaps he durst not have ventured to proceed to Nineveh without this fresh warrant, lest he should experience a disappointment like that of the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea, when they presumed of their own accord to attack the Canaanites, which they might have successfully done at the first in obedience to God:† Probably the word of the Lord now came to Jonah in the same way as before ; but whether in a dream, or a vision ; by the voice of the Spirit within, or of an angel without, is not recorded. In whatever way the communication was made, Jonah knew it to be from God ; and was led to admire that rich grace which restored him fully to his honourable office.

Where and when the prophet received this message from heaven, we cannot say. It is possible that

\* Isaiah iv. 8, 9. † Numbers xiv. 40-45.

he might be permitted to go to the land of Israel, and pay his vow at God's holy temple, according to his wish ; but it is far more likely, that this communication took place immediately after Jonah's release, and while he was yet near the shore on which the fish had thrown him. We may suppose that, by the good providence of God, he was landed at a place where, like Paul and his shipwrecked companions, he met with kind treatment from the natives ; and having refreshed himself among them, perhaps for a day or two, that he might be strengthened for his journey, he is commanded to proceed without further delay, to execute the service which he had formerly declined.

His orders were renewed in these terms ; " Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." He must now hasten with God's message to the people of that great and wicked city ; for their sins had come up before the Lord, vengeance was coming down against them with hasty steps, and some time had already been lost by the prophet's disgraceful flight. He had been penitently praying and vowed, in the fish's belly ; and now he is required to prove the sincerity of his repentance, by a ready submission to the will of God. This is the test by which the reality of our faith and love, our humility and contrition, must be tried : for what are professions, or promises, or vows, without obedience ? " If ye love me," says Christ, " keep my commandments.—He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."\* Such of God's children, in

\* John xiv. 15, 21.

particular, as have fallen into any gross sins, or omitted any important duties, must be careful to testify the truth of their repentance, by fleeing from the sins which they have practised, and earnestly returning to the duties which they have neglected: and since Jonah's crime consisted in deserting the service of God, he must shew his sincerity by a prompt obedience. In this way, Jonah will fulfil his vows, as effectually as by offering sacrifices with the voice of thanksgiving, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."\* Let the vows which have been made at sea, in times of danger, be thus performed, in a course of steady obedience to God. Those who have escaped the jaws of destruction, are particularly bound to devote themselves to his service, the life that has been saved by his power and mercy should be spent to his honour and praise.

Here, as in Jonah's first commission, Nineveh stiled "that great city." Perhaps the greatness of the city was one thing that served to make him averse to go thither: he had been accustomed to preach at Gath-hepher, and other villages or small towns, and might dislike the idea of visiting so large a city, and preaching to its numerous, wealthy, and powerful inhabitants. Yet, however great the city, or the inhabitants, he must now proceed to Nineveh without gainsaying. Indeed, the more populous the city was, the more

\* I Samuel xv. 22.

important was the sphere of his labours ; and he must hasten thither, lest the myriads of precious souls which it contained, should be left to perish in their sins. The destruction of so great a city would be peculiarly awful ; and therefore it was of the more consequence, that means should be speedily employed to avert it.

Jonah is ordered to go to Nineveh, “ and preach unto it.” We do not find that he brought the inhabitants “ good tidings of great joy,” he only proclaimed their awful danger ; his words were not promises of mercy, but threatenings of vengeance : and yet he is said to *preach* unto Nineveh. Many professed christians hate to hear denunciations of wrath, and allege that to discourse on the guilt and danger of sin is not preaching ; the language of their hearts is, “ Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things :” but the faithful minister, who does not speak to please the ear, or catch the fancy ; but to move the hard heart, arouse the careless soul, and save the lost sinner from going down into perdition, will proclaim the terrors of the Lord, as well as the joys of salvation ; and publish his threatenings against the unbelieving and impenitent, as well as his promises to returning transgressors. The publication of God’s threatenings against Nineveh was indeed preaching, and it proved successful preaching. “ The law is our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith :” the threatenings of vengeance awaken us to seek the blessings of mercy ; and he who has tasted the bitterness of sin, is prepared to relish the joys of pardon.

In preaching to the Ninevites, this ambassador God must abide closely by his instructions ; " Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." These words seem to allude to the orders first given him. Though he had found fault with his commission, it must not be altered to suit his humour; but he must go on the same errand, and preach the same things, as God had directed him before. We must not expect that God will give way to us, and accommodate his commands to our prejudices and inclinations: his will, and not ours, must be our law. Many seem to think, that God's precepts may be modified, to suit their fancy, or their supposed convenience. For instance, it is a proverb among some thoughtless seamen, " There is no Sabbath at sea ;" as if God's authority were not equally binding in every place, and at every time. It is true, there are duties to be done on shore which there is no opportunity of performing at sea, at least not to the same extent; but wherever we are, and in whatever circumstances we are placed, we must not for a moment suppose, that any of God's commands can be set aside or altered, to suit our convenience, or gratify our humour: we must observe them all to the utmost of our power. Jonah must preach, not according to his own fancy, but according to God's directions; and these are the same now as at first. " There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

But this order may refer to the future, rather than the past or the present. Jonah must preach whatever

God may bid him on his arrival at Nineveh. Perhaps he was not to receive the whole of his instructions, till he arrived at the scene of his labours. Naval officers are sometimes sent out to sea with sealed orders, which they are not to open till they reach a particular latitude; and Jonah must proceed to Nineveh, to preach what God might there enjoin him. Implicit submission to God's will is the duty of all his servants. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" must be the language of their hearts. And it is well for them, that they have a God to direct them at every step, unto whose guidance they can safely commit themselves. Jonah was to preach to a great city, and before great men; but he need "take no thought how or what he shall speak; for it shall be given him in that same hour what he shall speak;" and, if he meet with opposition, he must not be discouraged; for, "God will give him a mouth and wisdom, which all his adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist."\*

Brethren, you may be called to distant parts, without knowing what duties may be there required of you, in the providence of God: but it is pleasing to reflect, that wherever you are, you can always look unto God for counsel, and take encouragement from his promises to hope for his directing grace: for he says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee, in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye;" and again, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not

\* Matthew x. 19. Luke xxi. 16.

known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."\* The patriarch Abraham went out, at the call of God, not knowing whither he went ; and we, in like manner, must commit ourselves to God's disposal, humbly relying on him for guidance and support, in all the duties and difficulties that may lie in our way.

Ver. 3, 4. " So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. (Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.) And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Our heavenly Father chastens his children for their profit; and Jonah profited by the rod, for he no longer attempts to evade the arduous service assigned him. Like the psalmist, he might say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word." His corruptions, as we shall see afterwards, were not wholly subdued ; yet, having felt in his bitter experience the folly and danger of deserting his post, he no more turns his back upon Nineveh, but hastens thither to fulfil the duties of his office. He does not object, that the journey is long and perilous, that the service is unpleasant and mortifying, that the people are alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and so wicked that his life will be in danger : all his objections are silenced, and every thought is subdued to obedience. Thus the chastisement has the desired effect : the froward child returns to his duty.

\* Psalm xxxii. 8. Isaiah xlvi. 16.

But the path of duty is the path of honour, and interest, and true comfort: and as Jonah was now acting a part becoming his character and profession, his mind must have been in a very different frame on the way to Nineveh, from what it was on the way to Tarshish. He was miserable while attempting to escape from God's service; but, as he had attained a sweet composure of spirit even before his deliverance, there is reason to think, that in this happy frame he now prosecuted his journey. How long he was in travelling to Nineveh, and how he was supported by the way, is not recorded; but doubtless that God who upheld and cheered him in the belly of the fish, would not forsake him in any part of his tedious journey, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Assyrian capital; whether in traversing the deserts, or passing the rivers, in crossing the mountains, or walking through the plains: and we may well suppose, that God not only defended him from dangers, but inclined the hearts of the people among whom he pursued his journey, to befriend him on the road. He went to Nineveh bound in the Spirit, not knowing the things that should beset him there; and though bonds and afflictions should abide him, he will go in the strength of the Lord his God.

At length the prophet arrived at the Assyrian metropolis; and he found it to be indeed a great city, nay, "an exceeding great city." It might be called a divine city,—"great to God;" for such is the Hebrew phrase: it was a greater city than any other then known among

the sons of men. When Jonah drew nigh, and surveyed its vast extent, reaching so many miles along the banks of the Tigris; when he beheld its high walls, its lofty towers, its stately gates, and its magnificent palaces, he must have felt some degree of amazement. He had probably seen the towers of mount Zion, and the palaces of the city of David; and to his eyes, Jerusalem had a beauty and a grandeur which Nineveh could not rival; yet this proud mistress of the world far exceeded Jerusalem, in extent, in strength, and in riches; and the sight of it would naturally excite surprise and admiration. It was "an exceeding great city of three days' journey." Some understand this of its circumference, which was reckoned about sixty miles, and would make three days' journey, at twenty miles each day. But I rather think, that this expression is intended to describe the length of the city; for it immediately follows, "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey;" intimating, that he had then only proceeded through a third part of the town; and when we consider that, in passing along the streets, he must have halted frequently to preach to the inhabitants, we may well suppose that, as the city was about nineteen miles long, it would take him a whole day to travel through the third part of it.

Whatever emotions of wonder might arise in the prophet's mind, at the sight of this large city, he viewed it with sentiments of another description. We cannot say, indeed, that "when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it," as our compassionate

Redeemer wept over Jerusalem ; for, alas ! we shall find the prophet sadly deficient in that compassion for lost sinners, which all ministers of God should habitually entertain : yet he could not fail to be deeply impressed with the thoughts of its dreadful guilt, which, as God had told him, was now crying for vengeance ; and he would naturally think, how awful the destruction of this great city would be, when the day of vengeance arrived. Perhaps he might look forward, with the eye of prophecy, to the time when those vast walls, stupendous towers, and other noble buildings, would be so completely destroyed, that not one stone should be left upon another. That period has long since arrived : the great city Nineveh, which then reared its proud head, as the mistress of the world, and seemed to lay claim to eternity, has for many ages been lost in oblivion ; and so completely has it been swept away with the bosom of destruction, that scarcely a vestige of it can be found, and travellers are at a loss to point out the place where it stood. So true is that saying ; "The fashion of this world passeth away."

Whatever impression the sight of Nineveh produced on Jonah's mind, it did not prevent him from entering on his work as soon as he arrived. He did not spend time in going round the city, to survey its extent and grandeur ; nor in gazing on its spacious streets, and magnificent buildings ; nor in examining its antiquities and curiosities, which were most likely numerous and interesting : he had a higher object in view, and to that he immediately addressed himself ; being

neither deterred by the magnitude of the work before him, in having so great a city to preach to; nor diverted by the multiplicity of attracting objects which it presented, and which might have been supposed to retard or interrupt his labours. As soon as he entered the city, he began the important service for which he had been sent; and he seems to have been employed incessantly the whole day, in warning the Ninevites of their guilt and danger.

In fulfilling his commission, Jonah travelled through the streets, and cried, saying, " Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He " cried " to the inhabitants, speaking to them with a loud voice, to express his own earnestness, to arrest their attention and awaken their feelings the more forcibly, and to make a greater number of them hear the word of the Lord. The salvation of sinners is a matter of such vast moment, and in which the servants of God must feel such a deep interest, that they cannot be expected to engage in their work with a frigid indifference. The prophet cries aloud, and spares not; he lifts up his voice like a trumpet; to shew the Ninevites their transgressions, the men of Assyria their sins.

On this occasion, Jonah's boldness was as conspicuous as his earnestness. He was preaching to a great city, and to the great and powerful of the earth; yet he does not hesitate to proclaim aloud their guilt and danger. He is not afraid lest a mob should collect around him, and pull him to pieces, or stone him

to death : he is not terrified lest the king and his nobles should apprehend, and imprison, and kill him, for daring to spread such unwelcome and alarming news in the royal city ; but relying on the support of that God who had sent him hither, he boldly denounces against the city the speedy vengeance which was ready to overtake it.

The judgment threatened is of the most dreadful nature. It is not some partial loss or slight misfortune, but complete ruin : " Nineveh shall be overthrown." We may suppose that this city, great as it was, had met with many disasters at different periods ; but now it is threatened with a total overthrow. Perhaps some might think, that a city so strong, so impregnable, could not be overthrown ; but however unlikely the fulfilment of this prediction might seem, God could easily accomplish it ; either by traitors within or foes without, either by an earthquake beneath or by fire from heaven. Nay, the prophet is authorized to specify the very day when the judgment would be inflicted : " Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." At present the city might seem perfectly secure, and perhaps there were no more signs of an approaching catastrophe, than the old world could discern on the day before Noah entered the ark ; yet sudden destruction might come in the one case, as well as in the other. God could be at no loss how to bring ruin upon Nineveh in forty days, or even in one day ; say, in one hour her judgment might come.

It is very obvious, that the threatening which

Jonah uttered in the name of the Lord was conditional: at the end of forty days, the Ninevites must be destroyed, unless they repent; but, if they do repent, their ruin will be averted. Had no change been produced on them by the preaching of Jonah, inevitable destruction must have ensued, whether by sword, or fire, or earthquake: on the other hand, they were taught to believe, that if they repented, there would be a remission of their punishment, or at least a lengthening of their tranquillity. It is true, the condition is not expressed in the words of Jonah, but what is here recorded seems to be only the text on which he preached, and we cannot tell how he might enlarge on the subject, in his addresses to the Ninevites, under the direction of the Spirit of God. And indeed, the very proclamation of the threatening implied that the judgment might be averted by a timely repentance; for if God intended to destroy Nineveh at this time, whether the people repented or not, to what purpose was Jonah sent? The mission of Jonah was a clear intimation, that God had mercy in store for the Ninevites; for why should he send his servant from such a distance, merely to make known a calamity which could not be avoided, as if to torment them before the time? They justly inferred from the prophet's preaching, that this awful threatening was conditional, and that God was giving them space for repentance.

The time allowed them is forty days, a period that often occurs in scripture: and as Jonah appears to have spent this time at Nineveh, after his figurative

resurrection, before his return to Canaan ; so Christ his antitype, after he rose from the dead, spent the same space of time on earth, before his ascension to the better country. Forty days may seem a short period for seeking salvation, and so it is : yet it is longer than the Ninevites deserved, and it is sufficient space for repentance, if duly improved. Many would give the world for forty days, or even forty hours, to flee from the wrath to come, and prepare for eternity. What a blessing would forty days be to poor thoughtless sailors, when they are ready to perish in a storm !

Brethren, let us all remember, that the time which God is now giving us, should be diligently occupied in preparing for eternity ; especially as we know not how short it may prove. Were God to proclaim to us, that we had only forty days more to live, the alarming notice might be expected to awaken all our feelings and energies, to prepare for our latter end. Would not every sinner be earnestly seeking to escape from the wrath to come ? Would not every believer be casting off all the concerns of the world, to prepare for meeting with God, and entering into glory ? Now, we are not sure that we have so much as forty days ; nay, we dare not promise ourselves even to-morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow ; for what is your life ? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."\* You remember the conduct and fate of that rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully :

\* Proverbs xxvii. 1. James iv. 13, 14.

he said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"\* Are you, like that foolish worldling, eagerly pursuing the enjoyments of time, and neglecting your immortal souls? O think, how soon God may summon you to his tribunal! Yet forty days, and you may be laid in the dust: nay, for any thing you know, you may be called into eternity within forty hours. Seamen, who are in deaths oft, are especially bound to view the day of accounts as ever near. When you go to sea, my brethren, you know not if you shall be permitted to return home. When you are at sea, you are in jeopardy every hour, and cannot tell, when you rise in the morning, whether you shall see the evening or not. Awake, then, to serious consideration, ye who have been careless about your eternal interests! Awake, and turn unto the Lord without delay. Forty days, or a much shorter period, may be the whole space allowed you. "Behold, now is the accepted time: bebold, now is the day of salvation." The door of mercy is still open; but in a little time it may be shut for ever. Now you hear the voice of the Lord, warning you to flee from eternal wrath; and all his awful threatenings are designed to hasten your escape, and lead you quickly unto Christ for salvation: but if you despise his warnings, dreadful will be the result. Behold, the Saviour

\* Luke xii. 16—20.

waitheth to be gracious ; all day long he stretcheth out his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people : but the time is coming, when he will invite and entreat you no more ; the time is coming, “ when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”\* Now, therefore, while there is yet hope, while the days allotted you are not expired, make haste to believe in Jesus as your only refuge, and embrace the Lord as your God in Christ. “ Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”†

\* 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. † Isaiah iv. 6, 7.

## LECTURE VIII.

### NINEVER'S REPENTANCE AND RESPITE.

#### Chap. III. 5—10.

Verse 5. "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

In the former part of this chapter, we have an account of Jonah's ministry at Nineveh; we are now to consider his astonishing success, which in some respects was more remarkable, than that which attended the labours of any other ancient prophet. Elijah's services on the top of mount Carmel produced glorious results; but Elijah's congregation were Israelites, and it was not so much by his preaching, as by the glorious miracles wrought in answer to his prayers, that they were turned to the Lord; Jonah's hearers were Ninevites, and, as far as we read, he wrought no miracles among them; yet the whole city is awakened by his ministry, and brought in some sort to repentance. Our blessed Redeemer, who speaks of Jonah as a type of himself, notices his extraordinary success among the Ninevites, as a severe reproof to the children of Israel, especially to the unbelieving Jews who

lived in the time of Christ, and enjoyed his public ministry: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."\* And let us remember, while we view the repentance of Nineveh, that if we persist in unbelief and sin, like the obstinate Jews, Nineveh's repentance will be as much a reproach unto us as it was unto them. Let us therefore beware, lest the men of Nineveh should rise up against us also, to condemn us in the judgment.

In this verse, we have a general account of Nineveh's repentance, the circumstances of which are more fully stated in the verses that follow. Jonah had accomplished but one day's journey, in his progress through the great city, preaching to the people in every street as he passed along, proclaiming with loud voice the speedy vengeance which was ready to overtake them: and before he had penetrated into the remaining two thirds of the city, his preaching was attended with the most wonderful effects. The whole town was moved by the solemn warnings which he delivered in the name of the Lord. Wherever the prophet preached, the people crowded around him to hear his words: and his awful threatenings, instead of exciting the scoffs of the profane, or exposing him to the insults of the rude populace, or drawing upon him the vengeance of haughty and cruel magistrates, are every where received as messages from heaven. In every

\* Matthew xii. 41. Luke xi. 32.

street, the inhabitants, whether high or low, rich or poor, listen attentively to his solemn warnings; which, being received in faith, and accompanied by a divine power, sink deep into their hearts, awakening in them a serious concern for salvation, with the most lively feelings of contrition and humility: "The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

The conduct of the Ninevites, on this occasion, presents a striking contrast to that of the Israelites about the same period. Had Jonah published the same kind of threatenings in the streets of Samaria, or some other great city of Israel, some cruel Jezebel, or persecuting Ahab, might have speedily silenced him; or the sinners of Israel, who were wont to mock the messengers of God, might have loaded him with insults, or perhaps have imbrued their hands in his blood. God sent unto them all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; employing both promises and threatenings, words of mercy and words of wrath; giving them precept upon precept, and line upon line: yet we never find such a general repentance produced among them, as was now wrought among the Ninevites; though the latter enjoyed the ministry of only one prophet, who preached to them but a single day, who did not publish the promises of mercy and the blessings of the covenant, but uttered denunciations of wrath and threatenings of perdition, and who wrought no signs and wonders, to confirm his mission.

They might hear, indeed, by himself or otherwise, of the wonders which Jonah had experienced, since he was first commanded to preach to them ; for Christ says, that “ Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites,”\* intimating that they were instructed by his history, as well as by his preaching : yet no miracle was performed in their own presence, to recommend the doctrines of the prophet ; the wonderful change produced was purely the effect of the divine word, attended by the influences of the Spirit. “ Is not my word like as a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a haminer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?”† So it now proved to the men of Nineveh : their cold affections were kindled into fervent zeal, and their hard hearts became broken and contrite.

The first step in this important change was faith, without which there can be no genuine reformation ; “ The people of Nineveh believed God ;” and the word preached profited them greatly, being mixed with faith in them that heard it.‡ They believed, that the God of heaven had sent his servant to admonish and warn them ; and they received his message, “ not as the word of man, but, as it was in truth, the word of God.” They believed, that this holy and just God would immediately punish their crimes, unless they repented : and, at the same time, they believed him to be a God of mercy, who is slow to anger and ready to pardon ; and who had therefore sent them this gracious warning, to give them space to repent and seek his salvation.

\* Luke xi. 30. † Jeremiah xxiii. 29. § Hebrews iv. 2.

The faith of the Ninevites produced its proper fruits,—humility, contrition, and reformation. Faith without works is dead ; and the belief of the prophet's message would have been of no service to the people of Nineveh, had it not influenced their hearts and lives. Fasting and prayer, accompanied with resolutions of amendment, were its immediate effects. A general fast was proclaimed throughout the town, and the whole of the inhabitants, both great and small, high and low, put on sackcloth.

Fasting was much used among God's ancient people, and from them it was adopted by some of the neighbouring nations. At this day, it is still in use among pagans, as well as among Mahometans. It is an exercise designed to mortify the flesh, for the benefit of the spirit ; to humble the soul before God, by acknowledging our unworthiness of the least of His mercies ; and at the same time to express our sorrow for sin, as in times of great sorrow we lose our appetite, and have no relish for food. At such times, all ornaments will be laid aside as unseemly ; and penitents in ancient times were wont to put on the coarsest clothing, to intimate that they felt themselves unworthy of raiment as well as of food. These tokens of humiliation and godly sorrow are now adopted by the people of Nineveh : for, whereas they had been noted for luxury, both in food and in dress, they now proclaim a fast, and clothe themselves in sackcloth, which was the garb of suppliants and mourners.

This humiliation was general ; they all fasted and

put on sackcloth, "from the greatest of them even unto the least of them :" it was no partial affair ; persons of every age, and sex, and rank, humbled themselves before the Lord. All had their share in those crimes which called for the wrath of Heaven, and all must join in seeking to avert it. Corruption had spread its baleful influence among all classes, old and young, rich and poor, high and low ; the same destruction threatened to overwhelm them all, without distinction ; all, therefore, were concerned in the work of humiliation.

A more full account of this happy effect of Jonah's ministry is given in the next verses.

verses 6, 7, 8, 9. "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing ; let them not feed, nor drink water : But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God : yea, let them turn every man from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?"

In this circumstantial detail of the reformation begun at Nineveh, we find that the great men of the town, as became them, took the lead in this good work. The king and his nobles set the example, and

by their authority and influence, concurring with the prevailing sentiments of the people, the fast became quite general.

Jonah was not ambitious of preaching to the great, but, like Christ his blessed antitype, felt a pleasure in ministering to the poor : he did not, on entering Nineveh, repair to the court, nor take up his station in front of the palace, but proclaimed the word of the Lord throughout the streets, to the inhabitants at large ; well knowing, that all the people of Nineveh, of every rank, were alike interested in the message which he brought. Yet it was not long before the news of Jonah's preaching reached the court ; for those who heard him thought it their duty, as it certainly was, to convey the intelligence to their superiors ; and it being related as a matter of great moment, the Assyrian monarch and his council immediately held a consultation on the subject. It is not said, that they sent for the prophet, to hear from his own mouth the message which he brought ; yet it is very likely that they did. At any rate, they were satisfied, from what they understood concerning his preaching, confirmed as it was by the testimony of their own conscience, that he was no impostor, but was sent to warn them of their guilt and danger, in the name of the God of Israel, the God of heaven and earth, whom their crimes had provoked. Hence, instead of mocking at the words of the Lord, or treating his servant as a disturber of the peace, as many rulers have done in similar cases, they weighed the matter with seriousness and

deliberation ; and, listening to the divine warnings, they resolved to take immediate steps for averting, as far as in them lay, the awful judgments that now hung over them. With this view, they determine on the observance of a general fast, and proceed to enforce it, both by their example and their authority.

The promptitude with which the king himself adopted this measure was truly laudable. He had been sitting on his throne, arrayed in royal robes, attended by his ministers of state, and surrounded by all the ensigns of majesty ; and now, when he receives this alarming message from heaven, and begins to tremble at the word of God, he hastens to strip himself of all the gaudy trappings of royalty, and to assume the garb and posture of a humble suppliant : " He arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." Convinced of his guilt, he thus owns himself unworthy to wear a crown, or sway a sceptre, or fill a throne, in the presence of the King of kings, against whom he had sinned. Instead of imperial purple, he puts on sackcloth ; instead of sitting on a lofty throne, and wearing a glittering diadem, he sits in ashes, probably on the ground, and perhaps spreads ashes on his head ; humbling himself in the dust before the Most High, in whose sight even the greatest of men are but dust and ashes.

It is very necessary, that persons of the highest rank should know and confess their utter insignificance, in the presence of the Eternal. If even glorified

spirits above cast their crowns before the celestial throne, how much more should the princes of this world bend low at the footstool of Jehovah, to whom they are indebted for all their honours ! He appoints our rank in society, as well as the bounds of our habitation ; for "God is the judge ; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." " By him kings reign, and princes decree justice : By him princes rule, and nobles ; even all the judges of the earth :" and often he poureth contempt upon princes, while he setteth up the poor on high.\* Before him, the souls of all men are of equal value ; and there is no difference between the prince and the peasant, between the king and the beggar. Hence that remarkable precept of the law, commanding the Israelites, when they were paying the atonement money for their souls, to give every man the same sum. In all other offerings, the rich were expected to give of their abundance, and the poor what they could afford ; but, in paying a ransom for the soul, the rich were not allowed to give more, nor the poor less, than the appointed sum, half a shekel : to teach us, that all souls are alike precious in God's estimation.† It is essential for the good of society, that there be a distinction of ranks ; but the distinction ceases to vanish in the sanctuary of God, or at his throne of grace. Here the rich and the poor meet together ; rulers and subjects, captains and crews, stand on an equal footing : and all who are

\* Psalm lxxv. 6, 7. Prov. viii. 15, 16. Psalms cxvii. 40, 41., cxviii. 7, 8. † Exodus xxx. 11—19.

truly holy are brethren in Christ, however diversified their stations or callings.\*

The humility of this monarch appears the more remarkable, when we consider, that the Assyrian kings were notorious for pride and arrogance, luxury and effeminacy ; and recollect the extent of their empire, the unrivalled magnificence of their capital, the brilliancy of their court, and all the temptations with which they were beset. If this prince was, as some think, the celebrated Sardanapalus, proverbially noted as the most effeminate of mankind, his deep abasement was the more wonderful ; but it is thought, with more probability, that this must have been Piel, supposed to be his father, the first Assyrian king who invaded the land of Israel.† If that was the case, he would have more knowledge of the God of Israel, and would dread more the effects of his wrath. Yet, though he had offered no violence to the people of God, he had good reason to bumble himself in the dust, on hearing the alarming proclamation against his capital, since he must have been conscious of innumerable acts of cruelty, oppression, and wickedness of various kinds ; for most of the Assyrian monarchs, like most other ancient kings, were ambitious and overbearing, selfish and dissolute : they subdued with violence, and ruled with tyranny ; they rioted in blood, and wallowed in intemperance and lust. The king of Nineveh, there-

\* It is a well known and pleasing fact, that our late venerable sovereign, George III, on the day of his coronation, laid aside his crown when he was to engage in the solemn institutions of religion ; judging it irreverent, to approach the King of kings with a crown on his head. † 2 Kings xv. 19.

fore, might well tremble at the threatenings of God, and betake himself to fasting and deep humiliation.

The nobles of Nineveh seconded their king in this good work, imitating his example in acts of self-abasement, and uniting with him in passing a decree for the observance of a general fast throughout the town; and a royal proclamation to that effect was immediately issued, and published throughout all the streets of Nineveh. Kings and civil rulers may do much, by their example and authority, for suppressing impiety and vice, and promoting the interests of religion and morality. They must not usurp authority in matters of conscience, nor presume to dictate to their subjects what truths they are to believe, or what particular forms of divine worship they are to observe; as if Christ had entrusted them with the keys of his spiritual kingdom, and constituted them the heads of his church; but they should lend their countenance and support to the cause of God, in every lawful and scriptural way; that they may be nursing fathers unto the church of God, and blessings to the souls, as well as to the bodies, of their subjects. It is a happy thing for a state, when princes and people unite their efforts in the service of religion. This was now the case in Nineveh, the people felt no reluctance in complying with the decree of the king and his council; on the contrary, being themselves impressed with the preaching of Jonah, they contributed, each one in his place, to forward the work of repentance and reformation; and hence, what is here ascribed to the king and his

nobles, is regarded in verse fifth as the act of the people at large: All were ready to do their part in seeking to avert impending ruin; and this happy unanimity materially served, by the blessing of God, to produce a great and sudden change of temper and conduct, throughout the whole town.

The fast appointed was very strict; "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth." No food must be eaten, no luxuries enjoyed: the whole population of the town must afflict their souls, and humble themselves in the dust before God, as penitent criminals begging for mercy. Nay, not only the people of Nineveh, men, women, and children, must abstain from food, and wear the badge of humiliation, but even the cattle must submit to the same mortifications, as far as they were capable of feeling them. All the beasts, whether kept for food, for labour, or for pleasure, must fast as well as their owners; no provender must be laid in their stalls, nor any water given them to drink: and such of them as were wont to be clothed and adorned, must be covered with sackcloth. Their horses and camels, in particular, that were high fed, and richly caparisoned, must be made to feel the effects of hunger; and, instead of being covered with cloth of gold, and decorated with splendid trappings, after the fashion of the Assyrian capital, they must be covered with sackcloth; as horses in our funeral processions wear emblems of mourning. The beasts partook in the luxury and

pride of their masters, and therefore they must share in their mortification and abasement; especially as they would unavoidably share in their calamities, if the threatening of vengeance should be carried into effect. And though the beasts themselves could not derive any moral benefit from this measure, not being rational or accountable beings; it might have a good effect on their owners, who, on hearing the moans and cries of the beasts, and seeing their dejected and wretched appearance, would be more strongly affected with the bitter fruits of sin, and more humbled at the thought of their guilt, which threatened to involve their cattle and themselves in one common ruin.

How long this fast continued, we are not informed. No doubt it lasted one whole day at least; and though it could not be strictly observed during all the forty days, in which the divine judgments were suspended over Nineveh; yet we may suppose it to have been resumed, at intervals, again and again; and that the badges of humiliation were worn all the time.

Prayer and fasting are usually conjoined, and both are enforced by the edict of the Assyrian court: "Let them not feed, nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God." Even the beasts might be said to raise their cries to heaven on this occasion: when they felt the calls of hunger and thirst, and uttered the moans and cries peculiar to their kinds, they would in some sort be crying unto God for relief. In other passages the beasts are thus represented as calling on God: "The

young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." "Who provideth the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat."\* In like manner, when Joel describes the solemn fast, observed on occasion of a terrible famine, he introduces the cattle as participating in the groans and cries of their masters, as well as in their calamities; "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.—The beasts of the field cry also unto thee; for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness."†

But this part of the royal proclamation more properly concerns the men of Nineveh; to whom, and not to the beasts, the clauses immediately following obviously belong. The people must not only fast, and wear sackcloth, but "cry mightily unto God." It is observable, that they are not directed to repair to their heathen temples, and prostrate themselves before Nisroch, or Belos, or such like deities; neither are they enjoined to engage in public processions, or sacrifices: but they are ordered to pray unto the God of heaven. It was he who was ready to punish them for their crimes; it was he who sent his prophet to warn them; and, having heard of his mercy as well as of his power, and learned something of the worship which he received from his people, they must send up their cries to his throne of grace, imploring his compassion.

\* Psalm civ. 21. Job xxxviii. 41. † Joel i. 18, 20.

and forgiveness. And their cries to him must be mighty cries ; for it is the fervent prayer that is effectual. This was not a time for coldness and remissness : their sins had been crying to Heaven for vengeance ; and the messenger of God was crying against them, in the most awful threatenings : it became them, therefore, in this alarming crisis, to " cry mightily unto God " for mercy. Every family, and every individual, must pray as well as fast ; presenting the most earnest supplications to the God of heaven, whom their crimes had provoked, and whose wrath they dreaded.

Fasting and prayer, however, are of no avail, if we bring not forth fruits meet for repentance ; and therefore this royal edict proceeds to enforce a general reformation : " Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their bands." This was essentially necessary to testify the sincerity of their contrition and devotion : if they persisted in the ways of sin, all their professed humiliations and prayers were but insults offered to the God of holiness who claims not only an external worship, but devotion of heart and obedience of life. This is what God expressly declares, to all who attempt to impose on him by mere outward services, and imagine that fasting will avail them, without amendment of conduct : " Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou peast not ? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours : Behold,

ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness : ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?" \* This is the fast proclaimed at Nineveh: the people must "turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands;" abstaining from vice, as well as from food ; and not only afflicting their souls, but mortifying their lusts. They had all corrupted their way before God, and therefore they must "turn from their evil way" to the paths of holiness, changing the whole course of their behaviour ; and as they had especially abounded in deeds of violence, they must turn "from the violence that is in their hands." When Nahum afterwards published " The burden of Nineveh," the bands of the Ninevites were stained with blood, and injustice and violence reigned in the town ; " Wo to the bloody city ! it is all full of lies and robbery ; the prey departeth not." † The same sins, it appears, now

\* Isaiah Iviii. 3—7. † Nahum iii. 1.

prevailed in the Assyrian capital ; and the inhabitants, in turning unto the Lord from their evil ways, are especially called to cast off, with grief and detestation, those acts of violence with which their hands were polluted. In this blessed reformation "every one" is commanded to engage. Each had contributed his part to that immense load of guilt which threatened to overwhelm them ; and each must take a part in the work of repentance and reformation, without which they could not hope for deliverance. If each one would reform himself, the reformation would be universal ; and as every individual has an immortal soul, that needs eternal salvation, all are equally concerned to flee from the wrath to come.

The proclamation concludes with setting forth the great object in view, and expressing a hope that this object might be attained ; "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" This was what encouraged them to fast, and to pray, and to enter on a new course of life,—they hoped that the wrath of God might be appeased, and impending ruin prevented. They knew that their sins had provoked the righteous God to anger, and that his anger against them must be fierce, as their guilt was enormous ; yet, they had reason to believe, that he would not be inexorable, and that the fierceness of his wrath might turn away from them, that they might not utterly perish ; or at least they hoped, that if they should "break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by shewing mercy

to the poor, it might be a lengthening of their tranquillity.”\*\*

The Ninevites heard nothing but threatenings from the mouth of the prophet, as far as we read ; yet they cherish anticipations of mercy. God's people and his religion were in general well spoken of among the heathen, particularly as to manifestations of humanity and benevolence : “ Behold now,” said the Syrians, “ we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings.”† In like manner, the Assyrians might understand, that the God of Israel was a merciful God ; not like Moloch, and other cruel idols, who delighted in blood ; but a God of love and compassion, who delighteth in mercy. The ministry of Jonah among them was of itself a proof of the loving-kindness of God, as was observed in a former Lecture; and they might reasonably hope, that since God had sent them his ambassador from a far country, to warn them of their guilt and danger, he would not despise their applications, nor spurn at their endeavours to seek his mercy. Upon this presumption, then, they are resolved to act : “ Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ? ” It may be, that he has mercy in store for sinners of Nineveh : it may be, that his threatening may be conditional, and that their speedy repentance may lead to the remission of their punishment : it may be, that his fierce anger may abate, and their perdition be prevented. If there was but a mere possibility of

\* Daniel iv. 27. † 1 Kings xx. 31.

escaping ruin, it was worth all their pains to make the attempt : and, should they perish at last, they can be no worse for their repentance and reformation ; nay, they must needs be better, because they will have the less sin to account for. They are determined, therefore, to cast themselves on the mercy of God : and if they must perish, they will perish soliciting his grace.

The men of Nineveh were not mistaken in entertaining such favourable views of the character of God. Truly he is rich in mercy, slow to anger, and ready to pardon ; and though their views of his grace, and their ideas of an atonement, were very obscure, as might be expected in heathens, the Lord would not disappoint their hopes in his mercy. Accordingly, we find in the following verse, that the result corresponded with their wishes and expectations.

Verse 10. " And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not."

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good ; and he takes far more pleasure in marking the latter than the former. He beheld the repentance of the Ninevites, and noticed particularly the good works which they wrought. Had he merely heard their words, this would have been of small moment ; but he " saw their works," he found their practice to correspond with their profession, in that " they turned from their evil way." Their repentance produced its genuine fruits ; a general reformation

contradicted, and the town in a few days wore a new aspect. Instead of luxury, pride, excess, violence, and all kinds of vice; temperance, humility, justice, benevolence, and devotion, began to prevail.

God saw this happy change; and the expression implies that he approved it; for such phrases are often used to denote approbation: as when it is said, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous;" and, "His countenance doth behold the upright." He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity;"\* but his eyes are upon humble penitents, when they bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

The reformation began among the Ninevites, being thus accepted of God, led to that blessed result which was the great object of their fervent applications; the wrath which they deprecated was turned away, and the judgments which they feared were suspended: for, since they changed their conduct towards God, a corresponding change took place in his proceedings towards them; "God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." These expressions, like many others that occur in the sacred volume, are spoken of God after the manner of man: repentance, in as far as it implies a change of mind, is incompatible with the divine nature: "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent;" "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?"† Repentance, as applied to God, merely denotes a change in his dispensations,

\*Psalms i. 6. xi. 7. Hab. i. 13. † 1 Sam. 15. 29. Job xxiii. 13.

not an alteration of his purpose. In sparing the Ninevites, the Lord did not deviate from his first design; for this was what he originally proposed, and it was the very thing that his threatenings were intended to produce. A real change was wrought in the Ninevites, and this occasioned a relative change on the part of God, an alteration of his proceedings, corresponding with the alteration in their conduct; but no real change took place in his mind: for, "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."\*

After all, the judgments denounced against the Ninevites were not finally withdrawn, but only suspended. As the threatenings uttered against them were conditional, so was also the deliverance now conceded to them: it was not a full pardon, but a respite; and as they afterwards returned to their evil ways, the proceedings instituted against them, and now stopped for a season, returned again into their former course, and the wrath came upon them to the uttermost. They obtained, however, a lengthening of their tranquillity; and this respite is thought to have been extended to forty years, God giving them a year for each day in the threatening published by Jonah, in consequence of the general repentance and reformation which his preaching produced. Indeed, had they persisted in the new course of life which they began to pursue, the vengeance of Heaven would have been wholly averted, and Nineveh might have remained to the present day, a monument of divine mercy.

\* James i. 17.

There can be no doubt, that the repentance of a great proportion of the Ninevites was insincere ; yet they all obtained a reprieve. The Lord has such a love for holiness, and is so abundant in mercy, that he shews a respect even for appearances of goodness, and for approaches to reformation. Ahab was respite when he humbled himself, though he was still in love with sin, and died at last under the tokens of God's wrath.\* Rich is the grace of our God; he is slow to anger, but swift to shew mercy: and, now that the Ninevites began to reform, and exhibited promising appearances of amendment, he turned from his fierce anger, and would not destroy them.

Yet who can tell, how many sincere penitents might now be found in Nineveh? Christ tells us, that the men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with the evil generation that would not believe in him, and shall condemn it; may we not therefore hope, that many of them shall appear in the great day on the right hand of the Judge, to the praise of the glory of his grace? Numbers were saved in ancient times, through the merit of Christ's atonement, who had very imperfect ideas of the way of salvation through his blood; and gentiles, as well as Jews, were admitted to take hold of the covenant of God, and to share in the riches of his redeeming love. Many of these poor sinners betook themselves to the mercy of God for refuge ; and we have reason to think, that this mercy was extended, not only to their bodies, but also to their souls ; and that they were delivered, not only from temporal calamities, but from eternal perdition.

\* 1 Kings xxi. 29.

At a very early period did God make known his designs of mercy towards the heathen; and the repentance of Nineveh, the capital of the gentile world, was an earnest of the calling of the gentiles into the church of God. While the Jews are persecuting his prophets, and rejecting the offers of his grace, lo! he turns to the gentiles; and this large city repents at his first call.

Brothers, did the men of Nineveh repent and turn to the Lord, on the imperfect intimations of his mercy that were given them; and shall not we, who have the fullest discoveries of his grace in the gospel, accept the invitations of his love, that we may live for ever? It is not on a mere presumption that we are called to rely, but on the word and the oath of a redeeming God. We are not left to conjecture whether God will forgive us or not, on our believing in Jesus for salvation; for God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins. Escape then unto Jesus without delay, and receive that great salvation, which is secured unto all believers by infinite love, almighty power and unalterable faithfulness. Had you merely a faint hope, such as the Ninevites had, that you might obtain salvation by coming to Christ, even this should prompt you to throw yourselves on his mercy; resolving that if you perish, you will perish at the foot of the cross; but much more should you flee to him for refuge, when he gives you the kindest assurances of this love; and has expressly said, for the encouragement of poor sinners, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;"\*

## LECTURE IX.

### JONAH'S CHAGRIN AT GOD'S MERCY.

#### Chap. IV. 1—4.

Ver. 1. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.”

The natural tempers or dispositions of men are almost as much diversified as the features of their faces. Some are reserved, and others open; some forward, and others timid; some mild and deliberate, others passionate and impetuous; some cheerful and contented, others peevish and fretful. Now, it must occur to every one who has studied the different characters of the godly, that, though divine grace makes a wonderful change in the natural dispositions, improving the good and correcting the bad, there will still remain some traces of the original temper; and such of God's children as have had a very bad natural temper, will now and then discover some workings of the old leaven, unsubdued, or at least unextinguished.

Of this we have a striking illustration in the case of Jonah. He seems to have had one of the very worst tempers; to have been peevish and melancholy, and yet fiery and headstrong; and, though he was not

only a child of God, but a prophet, nay, even a type of the glorious Messiah, the sour fruits of his bad natural dispositions are very conspicuous. We have observed some of them in the foregoing chapters, and here we find others equally strange. One would hardly have supposed, that a saint, much less a holy prophet, could have betrayed a spirit so perverse as that which Jonah now breathed; but great failings and strong corruptions have too often been discovered in real believers. That such things are recorded by Jonah himself, without any attempt to throw a veil over his imperfections, is a proof both of his faithfulness and his penitence. Doubtless his failings are set before us for our warning, that we may shun the temptations into which he fell, and learn to be actuated by a better spirit.

After hearing of the great success which attended Jonah's ministry, we might expect to find his thanksgivings and praises for the salvation of so many sinners, and for the honour conferred upon him in his being made the instrument of their redemption; and we might suppose the prophet to be eager in forwarding the good work begun at Nineveh, and ardently seeking to extend this reformation to other parts of the Assyrian empire. As Paul counted it a high honour to be the apostle of the gentiles, so might Jonah magnify the Lord who had graciously advanced him to be the prophet of the gentiles; especially as it was an honour of which he was so unworthy. Well might he have said, "To me, who am less than the least of

all saints, is this grace given?" But ah! how different the spirit of the prophet from that of the apostle! The blessed change wrought at Nineveh, and its consequent preservation from ruin, instead of calling forth songs of praise and labours of love, only produced murmurs and passionate complaints: "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry."

There are occasions when anger may be justified, but even then it will become sinful, if it be not kept within due bounds: as it is said, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath."<sup>\*</sup> It is an important duty to restrain our passions, and maintain a proper composure of spirit; and though there had been something to offend Jonah, he ought not to have been *exceedingly* displeased and *very* angry. Much more criminal was Jonah's anger, as it was directed against God himself, who could not have given him any just cause of offence. It is truly strange, that a child of God should ever be displeased with his heavenly Father, or angry at his proceedings: yet such was the case with Jonah. He could not be angry with the Ninevites for repenting at his preaching; it was with God himself that he was dissatisfied; and this was a great aggravation of his crime; for, if he that is angry with his brother without a cause be in danger of the judgment,† how much more he that is angry with God himself?

Not only was his anger without a cause, as all anger against God must be, but even without the

\* Ephesians iv. 26. † Matthew v. 22.

semblance of a cattse. David was displeased because the Lord made a breach upon Uzza, yet he afterwards confessed that he had no reason to be displeased; "The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."<sup>\*</sup> David's dissatisfaction, however, was far more excusable than that of Jonah; for the death of Uzza was matter of real grief, whereas that which excited the displeasure of Jonah ought to have been a source of joy and gratitude. He was exceedingly displeased and very angry, because God was sparing the Ninevites, instead of bringing upon them his threatened judgments. Upon what principle then, could he justify, or excuse, his wayward passion? Was he afraid, that this general repentance in Nineveh would turn to the reproach of his countrymen, so many of whom continued impenitent under the means of grace? This was a reason for lamenting the obduracy of Israel, but not for being dissatisfied at the repentance and preservation of Nineveh: nay rather, he could draw from hence some forcible arguments, which he might employ, on his return home, with transgressors in Israel, to make them ashamed of their unbelief and impenitence. Was he jealous of the peculiar privileges and covenant mercies of the Jews, and offended because God was extending them to the gentiles? He ought to have considered, that the same grace which chose the seed of Abraham, might be shewn to the heathen, without any detriment to Israel; that the Lord was still the

\* 1 Chronicles xiii. 11. xv. 13.

God of the whole earth, and never meant to cast off all other nations; that he had already given many intimations of his mercy reserved for the gentiles; and that the time was coming when all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of God. Instead of cherishing the narrow prejudices of his countrymen, he ought rather to have rejoiced, that the sons of the stranger were joining themselves to the Lord, and taking hold of his covenant; and to have felt a pleasure in being the honoured instrument of fulfilling the gracious designs of Heaven. One would have thought, that, instead of giving way to an unworthy jealousy, when he saw the hand of the Lord stretched out for the salvation of the heathen, he would have “held his peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.”\*

Was Jonah afraid of his reputation as a prophet? This, indeed, appears to have been the principal ground of his unhallowed anger. Self is the grand enemy of souls: his own character was thought to be at stake; for, if Nineveh be not overthrown at the day appointed, he may be deemed an impostor, a false prophet. But, be it so that this apprehension was well founded; what a strange want of benevolence was there, in wishing that a whole city, and that the largest and most populous in the world, should be destroyed, rather than that his own reputation should be in danger! Surely the pleasure of having brought a whole people to repentance, and saved them from

\* Acts xi. 18.

impending ruin, was more than sufficient to compensate for any anxiety that might be felt on this head. What if a few scoffers should upbraid him with having deceived them; was this a matter of any moment, compared with the magnitude of the object accomplished? There was, however, no just ground for such apprehensions. It was clear that the Ninevites understood the threatening to be conditional; and therefore, instead of regarding Jonah as a false prophet, on occasion of their deliverance, they would be more ready to view him as an angel from heaven, sent to preserve them from destruction. How could his credit suffer by their repentance and salvation? Was it not the highest honour which he could have, that his ministry was blessed for saving them from threatening ruin, bringing them out of those detestable sins in which they were wallowing before his arrival, and leading them to fear and serve the living God? Would it have been a greater honour to bring down fire from heaven to consume them, than to be the instrument of saving them from everlasting burnings? Instead of complaining that his character was injured, he ought rather to have praised God, who had crowned his ministry with such astonishing success; a success which exceeded any thing effected by the ministry of any other ancient prophet, and which resembled that of the apostles on the day of pentecost, when thousands were converted at once.

We see then, how strange, how unaccountable, the prophet's behaviour now was. When he had every

reason to rejoice and bless God, his heart is filled with anger and discontent, his mouth with murmurs and complaints. He is displeased, exceedingly displeased, at that for which there is joy in heaven, at that which should give pain to none but devils; and he is angry, very angry, at those ways of divine mercy, which will furnish a theme for the songs of the redeemed, world without end! Alas! what is man? What are the best of men, when left to themselves? Much need have we to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation; to keep our hearts with all diligence, lest we give way to unhallowed passions, disgraceful to the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. “He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”\*

The unworthy temper of Jonah appears still further, by his prayer on this occasion, a prayer that deserves not the name.

Ver. 2, 3. “And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me: for it is better for me to die than to live.”

How unlike is this prayer of Jonah at Nineveh, to that which he offered up in the belly of the fish! In that prayer, he was all humility and submission; nay,

\* Proverbs xxv. 28.

though he was a close prisoner in the depths of the ocean, he lift up the voice of praise and thanksgiving. But what do we hear from him now? The language of impatience, discontent, and stubbornness. When passion rises in the breast, we have much need to keep the door of our lips, lest we speak unadvisedly; for what is spoken in passion, is seldom well spoken.

Brethren, let us try, by the grace of God, to rule our spirits. Seamen are often led into much sin, by giving way to passion; and ought therefore to be the more careful to have their passions under controul. If you must sometimes be overtaken with storms, let there be no storm in your own breast; and, if fierce billows must flow around you, let not fierce words flow from your mouth. Many who are addicted to that most detestable and heaven-daring sin, profane swearing, allege as an excuse, that they only swear when they are in a passion. But one sin cannot excuse another. Why do they not restrain their passions? Why suffer them to break forth with such impetuosity? Anger, rage, malice, revenge, and all other malignant ebullitions of the corrupt heart, are indeed the sources of manifold crimes, besides being criminal in themselves; and, for this very reason, we should strive to suppress the first risings of passion, lest it break forth at last with un-governable violence. Let us not be as "the wicked, who are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."\*

Great must have been the agitation of Jonah

\* Isaiah lvii. 20.

spirits, when he offered up this rash and unseemly prayer, in which he peevishly begs for death; and, to justify his request, prefaches it with the most absurd, unfounded, nay, impious charges, against the God of salvation: “I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.” What unaccountable perverseness is here! Jonah calls to mind the objections which he had urged at first against being sent to Nineveh, and his disgraceful flight to Tarshish; and one would expect, that the bare recollection of his misconduct, and of its consequences, would have for ever silenced all murmurs against God; that the thoughts of his rebellion and his punishment would have overwhelmed him with shame and confusion, and the thoughts of his glorious deliverance filled him with wonder, gratitude, and love; that the very naming of Tarshish would have brought tears in his eyes, tears of contrition, of thankfulness, and of joy: yet, with impious presumption, he flies in the face of that God, who had so wonderfully chastened and delivered him, and dares to vindicate his shameful flight, and to justify the motives from which it sprung. He will stand to it, that he was in the right, and consequently that God was in the wrong, and that the whole of God’s subsequent proceedings towards him were founded in injustice! He knew before, what would be the result of this mission to Nineveh, and therefore he had good

reason to attempt to escape ; and, now that his anticipations were verified, he might well complain of the treatment which he had experienced !

But what was it that this mormer had dreaded ? What is it that he now repines at ?—The repentance of Nineveh, and the mercy which it obtains. Yes : this is the sole ground of his unhallowed quarrel with his Maker ; this is all the mighty charge which he prefers, to justify his former rebellion, and his present passion. He knew so well the grace and mercy of God, that he was sure the Ninevites would be pardoned and spared ; and now the issue of his ministry was just what he had expected. Unreasonable and unfeeling man ! Was not this the very thing that should have prompted him to go to Nineveh ? Ought not this to have filled his heart with rejoicing, and his mouth with songs of praise ? There was joy, exceeding joy, among the angels of God, for the repentance and salvation of Nineveh ; and shall this blessed display of divine grace excite no emotions in the breast of a prophet, but those of anger, chagrin, and discontent ? Alas ! he knew not what manner of spirit he was of ; he would call down fire from heaven, on those whom God would enrich with showers of blessing ; and he breathes a spirit of hostility, against those whom God is regarding with the most tender compassion.

I wonder how Jonah could repeat this description of the divine character, without feeling some relentings of heart, some soft emotions of godly sorrow, of love to God, and compassion for sinners : “ I know

that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Did he know all this; and yet presume to resist the authority, censure the proceedings, and grieve the spirit, of this most kind, most amiable, most compassionate God? Did he know all this; and yet forbear to love, to admire, to celebrate, the wonders of this infinite mercy, the unsearchable riches of this divine grace? Did he know all this; and yet feel his heart bound up in its own selfishness, insensible to the impressions of gratitude, and steeled against the workings of compassion and benevolence? One would think, that the very repetition of these words was enough to melt a heart of flint; that such a lovely picture of the divine character would have charmed away all the gloom of melancholy, all the clouds of discontent and chagrin, and shed a soft reviving light over the prophet's soul. One would think, that as Jonah knew all this, not only by the sacred oracles, but by his own recent experience, he would have felt the cords of love and gratitude irresistibly drawing him to this God of mercy, and binding him for ever to his service. Oh! my brethren, how should we be ashamed and grieved, at the thoughts of having sinned against so much love, of having spurned at such unspeakable grace! How deeply should we be affected, with the thoughts of our base ingratitude to the God of our mercies; especially when we view his wondrous love as displayed in the cross of Christ! Me thinks, when the prophet was recording his prepost-

erous, passionate, impious complaints against the mercy of the Lord, his hand must have trembled while his pen was writing, and his book must have been bedewed with the tears of contrition.

The character of God which Jonah gives, and of which he most perversely complains, is one that ought to endear him to every saint. It exactly corresponds with the glorious description of Jehovah's nature; published in the ears of Moses in the mount; from which, and from some passages in the Psalms, Jonah's expressions seem to be borrowed. When Moses had prayed, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory;" the Lord replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee;" and accordingly, "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."\* This name, which Jehovah counted his glory; this adorable name, which should be written in letters of gold, is that on which Jonah presumes to found his complaint: but it must not be the less dear to us, for having been complained of; nay, it is not now the less dear to Jonah himself. It is precious both to saints below, and saints above; and the displays of this name, in the ways of mercy, will furnish songs to the church triumphant, throughout the endless ages of eternity. It was well for Nineveh, it is well for

\* Exodus xxxiii. 18, 19. xxxiv. 6, 7.

eat world, it was well for Jonah himself, that the Lord is indeed “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness ;” and that, though he threatens evil against the wicked, to warn them of their danger, he “repents him of the evil,” when they repent of their sins. Jonah murmured at his mercy, as though it were too abundant. Foolish man ! he himself stood in need of all that mercy, with which he preposterously found fault. Had it not been for this astonishing mercy, the insults which he now offered to the God of heaven, would have brought down upon his own guilty head, that wrath which he expected to fall upon Nineveh.

The madness of the prophet, and the riches of God's forbearance towards him, appear from the rashness of his petition, as well as from the presumptuous language with which it is prefaced. He has the assurance to pray, that God would instantly kill him, as he could not bear to live under such a disappointment: ‘Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live.’

When Jonah was in the belly of the fish, he blessed God for bringing up his life from corruption ; but now he prays that his life may be taken away. This was a most improper request, in his present temper and circumstances. Believers may very lawfully ‘have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better ;’\* according to the words of Paul : but the spirit breathed by the apostle, in the passage

\* Philippians i. 23.

alluded to, differs widely from that which the prophet now cherished. Paul desired death, from an ardent love for heaven, or rather for his dear Redeemer, whom he longed to see and enjoy in heaven; Jonah, on the contrary, wished for death, in a fit of passion, because he was dissatisfied with God's proceedings. His prayer resembles that of Elijah under the juniper-tree, when "he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."\* Yet, though Elijah's prayer can scarcely be commended, as it seems to argue a want of faith and courage, it was much more excusable than that of Jonah. Elijah was persecuted by the blood-thirsty Jezebel, was grieved at the small success of his ministry, and had little prospect of further usefulness among his degenerate countrymen; and therefore wished for the repose of the grave, to put an end to his anxieties, his fatigues, and his dangers: but Jonah peevishly wishes for death, because his ministry is successful, because the Ninevites through his preaching are saved from impending ruin; and his request is not couched in such respectful language as that of Elijah; for as he prefaches it with advancing groundless charges against God, so he insists that it is a proper request, which ought to be granted immediately: "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

No petition could be more unseasonable. It was

\* 1 Kings xix. 4.

not a time to die, when his labours were beginning to be effectual for the conversion of the Ninevites : it was a time for redoubled exertions ; and he should rather have besought God to prolong his life, that he might assist in carrying on, and extending, the good work begun in Assyria ; or that he might return to labour, with renewed zeal and fresh advantages, in his own land. Besides, he was in a very unfit frame for dying. How could he think of rushing into the presence of an holy God in a fit of passion, and while he was repining and fretting at the good ways of the Lord ? Was his a state in which he could appear before his Judge ? Alas ! he knew not what he was asking, else he would not have prayed for death, at a time when he was so unfit for the eternal world. Many speak as if they were weary of the world, and desirous of heaven, when, like Jonah, they are only dissatisfied with the arrangements of Providence, and are wholly unprepared for passing into eternity.

Yet there is one thing commendable in Jonah's prayer ; while he beseeches God to take away his life, he intimates that he will wait till God is pleased to grant his request, and will not attempt to shorten his days, as too many have done when they were in a peevish, desponding humour. He wishes for death, but will have no hand in hastening its approach himself ; on the contrary, whatever may be his sufferings and disappointments, he is resolved to say, like Job in his afflictions, " All the days of my appointed time till I wait, till my change come."\*

\* Job xiv. 14.

Such is Jonah's rash prayer, let us now consider the answer which God returned.

Verse 4. " Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry ?"

It is hard to say, which is the most astonishing; Jonah's perverseness, or God's forbearance. Truly he found by experience, that the Lord is a gracious God; for divine grace is conspicuous in the gentle rebuke which he now received. It is well for us, that God's ways are not as our ways; and that, when we speak to him unadvisedly, he does not take us at our word. Jonah, in his sullen humour, prays for death; yet God does not instantly cut him off, like Ananias and Sapphira; nor strike him dumb, like Zacharias; nor even reprimand him with severity; but, in the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, he merely gives him this mild reproof; " Doest thou well to be angry ?" How wonderful is the patience of God, in bearing with his murmuring servant! O let us learn, my brethren, to copy this divine pattern; shewing kindness to the evil and the unthankful; not rendering railing for railing, but returning a soft answer, to those who unjustly censure or reproach us!

In this gentle rebuke, God desires Jonah to reflect on the unreasonableness of his behaviour; " Doest thou well to be angry ?" Sin is a thing so foolish, so contrary to right reason, and to the best interests of man, that God can appeal to the sober judgment of transgressors themselves, concerning the wickedness and madness of their conduct; and he puts it to Jonah,

to say if, upon due consideration, he himself can presume to justify his rash expressions, and unhallowed passion. If he reflected for a moment on his present temper, he must have been conscious that it was utterly unbecoming a child of God, especially one who filled the prophetic office, and for whom God had wrought such amazing wonders.

“ Doest thou well to be angry ?” There is scarcely any thing more unseemly, more opposite to our reason, our comfort, and our interest, than turbulent passion. Rage, or violent anger, is a species of madness. Well may it be called *passion*, or *suffering*, for the wrathful man inflicts the keenest sufferings on himself: “ he teareth himself in his anger,” and deeply wounds his own peace, as if he were a madman, or in the delirium of a fever. We may say of the passionate man, as well as of the drunkard, that if, in his sober moments, he could see a picture of himself, such as he is in his madness, he would be so shocked at the sight, that he could not bear the thoughts of making himself such a beast again. Never let us degrade ourselves to the rank of wolves and tigers: never let us imitate those wicked men who are as “raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame.”

The anger of Jonah being peculiarly culpable, a little reflection might soon convince him of his sin. Was it well to be displeased with the ways of God, even if those ways had been really afflictive and trying? Was it well to repine at the dispensations of mercy, which should delight all saints? Was it well to be

grieved at the salvation of sinners, a subject that gives joy in heaven ? Was it well to pray, in a sullen and peevish humour, for the stroke of death, which it requires much seriousness, much faith, much love, much holiness, to meet in a proper manner ? No : it was ill ; it was exceeding ill : and Jonah, on a review of his behaviour, might see that the spirit which he now breathed, was not the spirit of a child of God.

The character which Jonah bore, and the circumstances in which he was placed, greatly aggravated his guilt ; and an emphasis may be put on the word *thou*, in this expostulation. “Doest thou well to be angry ? thou, who hast so often, and so recently, shared in the richest mercies ? thou, who hast been taught so lately the bitterness of sin ? thou, who hast been appointed a prophet,—a prophet of the gentiles ? thou, who hast had such astonishing success in thy ministry at Nineveh, and hast so many reasons to rejoice and give thanks ? Doest thou well to be angry, who art laid under so many and so strong obligations to love and praise the Lord ?” Brethren, the more we are bound to God’s service, by the favours which he has shewn us, the greater is our guilt if we murmur at his proceedings, or rebel against his word. Has he saved you, like Jonah, from the dangers of the sea ; stretched out the shield of his providence over you, in the hour of peril ; and often loaded you with a rich supply of his benefits ? O beware of spurning at the grace, or repining at the ways, or grieving the Spirit, of your gracious Benefactor ! If he gives thee so much, ungrateful sinner,

doest thou well to be angry because thy wishes are not all fulfilled? Doest thou well to be angry, because thou meetest with some crosses and disappointments? Doest thou well to be angry at trials and hardships, when thou knowest that God does all things well, and can make all things work together for thy good?

As Jonah made no answer to the reproof that was given him, we may hope that he felt its justice; that grace for a time prevailed against corruption, or that he was so far humbled as to hold his peace, and check his anger and discontentment. When God judges he will overcome: and all that contend with him shall sooner or later see their error, and confess their madness, to the praise of his glory.

It is good for us, my friends, to be often inquiring if we do well; according to the words of God to Jonah. Self-examination is of high importance, to awaken us out of security, and excite us to duty. Doest thou well, O Christian, to be cleaving unto the world, and neglecting communion with God? Doest thou well, to let thine affections grovel on the paltry enjoyments of time, when such glorious objects demand thy supreme regard? Doest thou well, to be slothful in seeking thy God, and careless in preparing for thine eternal inheritance?

Gospel-hearer, ask thyself in like manner, if thou doest well to remain at a distance from this gracious God, to refuse the offers of his gospel, and despise the wonders of his love? Doest thou well, to defer thy preparations for eternity, and to go on thoughtlessly in

unbelief and sin ? Doest thou well, to put away from thyself the words of eternal life, and expose thyself to the fierce wrath of a righteous God ? Oh no ! thou doest foolishly ; thou doest madly. What folly can be equal to that which ruins the soul for ever ? What madness is like that which forsakes the Fountain of living waters, and separates us for ever from the Source of happiness ? O think, wretched sinner, what a kind, what a gracious God, thou art rejecting ! So abundant is his goodness, that some have complained that he is too kind and too compassionate. But, let our souls rejoice at this unspeakable mercy, with which Jonah quarrelled; and let the thoughts of God's rich love draw our hearts unto him as our redeeming God, subdue all our enmity, and melt our souls into contrition, gratitude, and love. Yes ; blessed be his name ! he is "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents him of the evil :" and in this endearing description of his character our tongues shall triumph, our hearts shall be glad. "Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul , and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."\*

\* Psalm ciii. 1—4.

## LECTURE X.

JONAH REPROVED AND GOD'S MERCY VINDICATED.

Chap. IV. 5—11.

Ver. 5, 6. "So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd."

In reading the histories of saints in scripture, a thought may sometimes steal into our minds, that the lives of weak believers should have been consigned to oblivion, and none but the most perfect examples recorded; or at least, that a veil should have been cast over the infirmities of the godly, and only their praiseworthy actions exhibited. But a little reflection may suffice to teach us, that the divine Author of these narratives has adopted a plan the most worthy of himself, and the most profitable to his church. These faithful memoirs, setting forth the frailties and sins of believers, as well as their piety and goodness, not only

furnish a striking evidence of the truth of the sacred volume, but are like charts to mark out those shoals and rocks, on which we are in danger of striking, and which we must steer clear of; and at the same time, they illustrate the kindness and forbearance of God towards his unworthy children, and thus serve to encourage weak believers, who might be ready to sink in despair, did they not find, that the people of God in all ages have been encompassed with infirmities.

In this point of view, the history of Jonah is of great value. He was one of the feeblest of God's ancient servants; yet the Lord loved and honoured him, notwithstanding his numerous failings. We have seen much of his weakness, and of God's long-suffering, in the foregoing Lectures; but no where do we find them more conspicuous than in the closing part of his book, which now demands our attention.

It is observable, that in his history, as in that of Solomon, there is no account of his repentance; his sun appears to set under a dark cloud: yet doubtless he was restored through the riches of divine grace; and as Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, as a token of his sincere contrition, so Jonah furnished a similar proof of his repentance, by writing this undisguised memorial of his folly; giving glory to God and taking shame to himself, and exhibiting his own case for the instruction of the church in every succeeding age.

We found in the last Lecture, that God expostulated with Jonah on the absurdity and wickedness of his passionate complaints, and that Jonah made no reply.

being perhaps convinced, in some measure, of the frowardness of his temper. Yet here we perceive, that his spirits were not so far composed as to enable him to resume his labours in Nineveh, for directing the people in the ways of God, which they now seemed to choose: on the contrary, he cannot bring his mind to acquiesce in the preservation of the city, but entertains an idea, that God may yet save his credit as a prophet, according to his perverse view of the matter, by visiting this large metropolis with some tremendous judgment. In this hope, if hope it may be called, he retires out of the city, to a spot on the east side of it, perhaps some rising ground, from whence he could have a full view of the town; and there he resolves to abide, till he should see what would be its fate, whether God would save or destroy it.

If the forty days were not yet expired, there might be some propriety in retiring from Nineveh, to impress the inhabitants the more with the thoughts of their guilt and danger; as Lot withdrew from Sodom when it was ready to be overthrown. Some of the Ninevites might still need to be excited to repentance; and Jonah's quitting the town, as sailors escape from a sinking vessel, might serve to alarm, and convince, and humble them. Yet, though we may suppose that Jonah's dissatisfaction began before the expiration of the forty days, upon his seeing evident tokens of the repentance of the Ninevites, and of God's design to spare them, it would seem from the close of the last chapter, that the days were fulfilled; or at least, we

have reason to believe, that he lingered on the east-side of the city, long after the period was ended, in the expectation that something might occur to verify his prediction in one shape or another.

The prophet's retirement might have had a salutary effect on his own mind, had his sullen humour permitted him to improve it. It is good for us to withdraw at proper times from the bustle of the world; but it should be to converse with God in meditation and prayer, and raise our affections towards heaven; not to indulge in melancholy, nor cherish discontent.

If Jonah's withdrawing from Nineveh was not conducive to his spiritual interests, still less did it subserve his outward comfort. The spot to which he retired was in an exposed situation; for he did not select a place where he would have most shelter, but one from whence he could have the best view of the city, so as to have an opportunity of witnessing its overthrow. Here were no spreading trees, under whose verdant shade he might recline; no friendly rocks, to shelter him in this weary land: so that, to defend himself from the scorching heat by day, and the chilling damps of the night, he is forced to make himself a booth, constructed perhaps with branches of trees, or shrubs, which he carried up thither from the banks of the Tigris.—What needless troubles do men create to themselves by their own folly! They complain that God is making them miserable, and yet take the most direct methods to increase their misery in a tenfold degree. Had Jonah been now employed, as

be ought, in leading the people of Nineveh to a better knowledge of God and of his ways, he might have been comfortably lodged in the town ; for those who repented at his preaching could not but respect him, and we may suppose them to have pressed him to come into their houses, and accept their hospitality : but, in his present sullen mood, he will rather lodge in a wretched booth, than in the palaces of Nineveh. His temper is soured by his fancied disappointment ; and since he expects and desires their ruin, he can have no friendly intercourse with them. Thus his passion becomes his punishment. Well might Wisdom say, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul."

Jonah's booth was but a poor shelter for him ; it neither kept out the sun nor the wind : but God was pleased to grant him for a season a much better covering. "The Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." The repining prophet deserved to be left unsheltered, that he might taste the bitter fruits of his folly ; but God is kind to the evil and unthankful, and, however unworthy the conduct of his servant, he will not wholly exclude him from the tokens of his favour. At the spot where Jonah had his booth, God made a large plant to spring up quickly from the ground, that its grateful shade might protect him from the sultry heat. This plant, here called a *gourd*, is generally thought to have been the *ricinus*, or *palma Christi*, common in these eastern parts. It is described as rising some-

times to the height of eight feet, with very large leaves, fitted to yield a refreshing shade. It is also said to be of a rapid growth: but this cannot account for the sudden springing up of this plant in the present instance, its growth being wholly preternatural. The same God who prepared the fish to swallow Jonah, prepared the gourd to shelter him: for all nature is at his disposal, and every thing in the vegetable, as well as the animal kingdom, is obedient to his call. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man;" and all the comforts derived from the vegetable creation, should awaken our gratitude to our bountiful Benefactor. His almighty power made this gourd to spring up in one night, as is afterwards stated, so as to form next morning a cooling shade over the head of poor Jonah, "to deliver him from his grief." He had a violent head-ache, it would seem, occasioned by the heat of the sun, and probably increased by the heat of his own passions; and this kind refreshment was sent him for a time, to alleviate his pain, and assuage his grief.

This seasonable relief was very gratifying to the afflicted prophet: "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." Persons who have travelled in hot eastern climates will best conceive, what a refreshment it must have been to him, to have such a plant spread over his head, excluding the sultry beams of the sun. He was highly delighted with this token of God's condescension, and his joy at the relief which it brought him was extreme. Persons of a warm natural temper are

liable to great vicissitudes of feeling ; their pleasures and their pains, their joys and their sorrows, are all superlative. When Jonah was displeased, he was “ exceedingly displeased ;” and now, when he is glad, he is “ exceeding glad.” But it is not fit, that earthly objects should create such violent agitations in our spirits. Why should the trifles of a day thus lift us up, or cast us down ? Let the christian learn to maintain that sweet composure of spirit, which cannot be greatly ruffled either by prosperity or adversity. “ They that weep must be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not :—for the fashion of this world passeth away.”\* Sublunary joys should always be moderate, for they are all uncertain : and if we indulge in them to excess, our disappointment must be the greater, if they fail us. Jonah’s immoderate joy for the gourd, soon led to excessive grief for the loss of it.—This effect may especially be looked for, if our comforts lead us not to God. We do not read that Jonah blessed God for the gourd : and if his joy centred more in this creature-comfort, than in the God who bestowed it, no wonder that it issued in bitter sorrow.

Veres 7, 8. “ But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind ; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.”

\* 1 Corinthians vii. 30, 31.

How fleeting are terrestrial things ! Jonah's gourd sprang up fresh and promising ; its stalk was strong, its leaves were healthy, and its flowers were ready to blossom : but alas ! how quickly does it fade and perish ! Such is man himself : " He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." " All flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." " In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up ; in the evening it is cut down and withereth."\* Such also are all human enjoyments. While our hopes are fair and blooming, and we are promising ourselves long and rich delights, some unexpected occurrence blasts our prospects, and all our fancied bliss vanishes like a dream. Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd ; but his joy was only for a night : next day, early in the morning, the gourd began to wither, and by the time the sun arose, it was faded and shrunk down ; so that its verdant leaves could screen the prophet's head no more, its comely form was gone, and all its beauty sunk into the dust. Nor was the gourd destroyed by any formidable agent ; by the rushing wild beast, the furious storm, or the lightning's flash : it fell before an insignificant reptile. A worm attacked it at the root ; and suddenly gnawing its substance, and cutting off the channels by which its moisture was drawn from the earth, made it wither, and droop, and die. It is thus, that causes unseen, and apparently trivial, quickly destroy our sweetest pleasures. While our delights look fresh and blooming, a worm is at the root of them, which will soon lay them in the dust.

\* Job xiv. 2. Isaiah xl. 6. Psalm xc. 6.

The worm that smote Jonah's gourd was unperceived, but not unsent. He who prepared this blooming plant, "created the waster to destroy it;" for he lives, and he takes away; he saves, and he kills; according to his sovereign will. The great fish was prepared by him, and so was this small insect; for all creatures, even the most minute, are subject to his authority, as they are sustained by his bounty. Worms, as well as angels, "do his commandments, earkening unto the voice of his word;" and he displays his glory, in employing the most insignificant creatures to humble proud mortals, and usher in great rents. Reptiles still more contemptible than worms, helped to bring down the pride of Pharaoh, and forward the redemption of Israel.

But why was the gourd so quickly smitten? Was not tantalizing the prophet, to send him this relief, and then aggravate his sufferings by snatching it away? Does God delight in harassing the feelings of his servants? By no means. It was for wise and gracious ends, even for God's glory and Jonah's profit, that the gourd was made to grow, and then to perish. By this means, the prophet was not only chastened for his ingratitude and perverseness, shewn the vanity of created objects, and directed to betake himself humbly to God as his only refuge; but was also taught, as we shall see more fully, a lesson of compassion. For these purposes the gourd is smitten, and Jonah is made to feel keenly the want of its refreshing shade; for, "it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that

God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted." Formerly a mighty wind was sent in pursuit of Jonah; now a vehement wind is sent to scourge him; for, as sea-faring people should especially remember, God has all kinds of winds at his call; and sends what wind he pleases. The former wind was probably from the west, to oppose the prophet's flight; this was sent from the east, to increase the effects of the heat. There is often felt in these oriental countries a scorching east wind, which, when accompanied with the sultry heat of the sun, as in this case, is peculiarly oppressive: the traveller is in danger of being suffocated with this vehement wind, while the solar rays are so hot as to blister his skin. To the combined influence of this east wind and of the burning heat of the sun, is Jonah now exposed; for, his gourd being gone, and his booth insufficient to shelter him, the wind and sun beat on his head together, and his pain being almost intolerable, he faints, and sinks down, and is ready to perish.

One might expect, that in these circumstances, Jonah must be humbled under the hand of God, as in the fish's belly, and acknowledge the justice of God, in scourging him for his impatience. He had complained without a cause, and now he might perceive, that the Lord was righteous in sending him a real cause of trouble and anguish. But alas! his perverse temper is yet unsubdued; and instead of giving glory to God, he is more impatient than ever. "He wished in himself

to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live." Instead of mourning for his former offence, he repeats it: in a sullen and peevish frame he wishes for death to put an end to his sufferings; when he ought to have endured them with patience and fortitude, saying, like the prophet, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." He speaks as if his life were bound up in the gourd, alleging that it is better for him to die, than to live without it.

Ver. 9. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death."

Jonah's renewed murmurs give occasion to fresh instances of God's forbearance. Instead of taking him at his word, and cutting him off in his iniquity, the Lord condescends to reason with him, that he might see his folly. "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Why did he fret for the loss of the gourd? It was the gift of God; and if he who gave it thought proper to take it away, the prophet should have blessed his name even for the short relief which it had yielded. Besides, God could make another gourd to spring up in its place; or, if Jonah could not expect this, he might find shelter among the trees on the banks of the river, or remove into some house in Nineveh or its suburbs. At any rate, he had only lost a feeble plant; and why should he murmur, when the Lord himself remained, to be the portion of his soul? It is impious to be angry with God for any thing, but especially for the loss of trifles.

This mild rebuke ought to have made the prophet ashamed of his perverseness ; but alas ! his corruptions are now risen to their greatest height ; for whereas he made no reply to God's former expostulations, being silenced if not humbled, now he flies in the face of God, and spurns at his just reproof. When God asks, "Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd ?" he presumptuously answers, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." It is truly amazing to hear a mortal, particularly a prophet, speaking thus to the Most High. How could he dare to justify his wicked passions, to assert that he did well to be angry at God's holy providence, even if he should fret himself to death? Is this that Jonah who prayed with such fervour and humility, such faith and gratitude, in the belly of the fish? Where now are his vows and professions? O how strangely have his corruptions changed him!—See, my brethren, how weak we are, if left to ourselves; how outrageous our passions may become, if they are not controlled by divine grace. Never let our hearts rise against God, whose ways, however trying to us, are all just and good. Too many repine at his dispensations, and bring upon themselves sore sickness, without being aware of the evil of their conduct.

Jonah's presumption having risen to such a height, we might suppose that God's patience must be exhausted, and that such an insult cannot be borne with; but, O astonishing grace ! the prophet is not cast off in his rebellion : he is spared, and reasoned with, and reclaimed ; for he must needs have been reclaimed by the following merciful expostulation.

Ver. 10, 11. “ Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow ; which came up in a night, and perished in a night : And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand ; and also much cattle ?”

Here God's principal design in cutting down the gourd is graciously unfolded ; it was to draw from Jonah's feelings on the occasion an argument in favour of the poor Ninevites, to silence his murmurs, and bring him to reason. “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.”\* Jonah's affliction imparts a lesson of compassion, and his own sensations are turned into an argument against himself. There was something very criminal in his present temper; yet that kind God, who is willing to make the most of what is in his servants, perceived something good in his feelings, even that pity which he had for the gourd, whose stately form and opening beauties met such an untimely fate; and his regret for this hapless plant is brought forward to vindicate God's mercy to Nineveh.

In reasoning with Jonah, God convicts him out of his own mouth : the pity which he had expressed for the gourd, was far more than sufficient to justify God's compassion for the Ninevites, which was the ground of his complaints. The gourd had cost him neither labour nor care, it sprang up without his help;

\* Psalm xciv. 12.

but the men of Nineveh were all creatures of God, formed by his power, sustained by his fostering care, objects of his tender solicitude. The gourd was a mean, short-lived plant, " which came up in a night, and perished in a night :" the Ninevites, on the contrary, were intelligent creatures, possessed of immortal souls, destined to live for ever, in endless bliss, or endless wo. The gourd was but one, and perished singly, without involving others in its fall ; but Nineveh contained an immense population of men, women, and children, besides vast numbers of cattle ; and what an awful havoc must take place, if the city be destroyed ? Compared with such a catastrophe, the smiting of the gourd, nay of many millions of gourds, was not worth a thought ; and if Jonah had compassion on an insignificant plant, how much more might the God of mercy have compassion on Nineveh !

If Jonah should allege, that the crimes of the Ninevites called for vengeance, let him reflect, that there were myriads in Nineveh to whom this remark could not apply ; even " more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," being yet in a state of infancy, incapable of partaking in the wickedness of the town. If he had no bowels of mercy for the adult inhabitants, can he desire the ruin of an hundred and twenty thousand helpless babes ? Surely his heart must shudder at the thought. It is true that, as in the deluge and in the overthrow of Sodom, God in his holy providence may cut off children with their wicked parents ; for he

has a right to take away the life which he gave: yet the destruction of infants is truly lamentable, and the Lord expects, that we should be deeply affected with it.

How rich are the compassions of our God! He has a tender regard for helpless youth, as well as feeble age. Well may little children receive him as their Father, and the guide of their youth: and well may parents commit their offspring to his gracious care. Seamen who have children, may safely leave them under his protection, when they are going on a voyage; for he who had compassion on the babes of Nineveh, will not neglect the offspring of British seamen who put their trust in his name.

Not only the infants of Nineveh, but even the cattle, are the objects of divine mercy. If Jonah had pity on the gourd, which was only a vegetable, much more might God spare Nineveh, where there were myriads of people, "and also much cattle." The Ninevites had great numbers of horses, camels, oxen, and other beasts; and the destruction of ten thousand gourds was far less affecting than that of so much cattle. We have seen, in a former chapter, that these cattle partook in the humiliation of their owners; and God, perhaps with an eye to that circumstance, here speaks of them as admitted to participate in their deliverance. Very pleasing are those precepts of the divine law, which enjoin humanity to beasts and to birds.\* Such injunctions exhibit the divine character in the most amiable light, and loudly reprove those

\* See Exodus xxiii. 5, 19. Deut. xxii. 1, 4, 6, 7, xxv. 4.

brutal sports, in which animals are tormented, or are made to torment each other, for the amusement of savage men. Barbarities of this kind must needs be abominable in the eyes of that God who had pity even on the cattle of Nineveh. “ O Lord, thou preservest man and beast: How excellent is thy loving-kindness!”\*

But, my brethren, it is by the human race alone, that the special love of God can be enjoyed; and, blessed be his name! that love is exhibited to all mankind, in the invitations and promises of his gospel. We have found, in this valuable book of scripture, much of his goodness to men; and to seamen in particular: and in the scriptures of the New Testament, we see much more. O that his tender mercies may deeply affect your hearts, and draw you to that kind redeeming God, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all! Come, thou Holy Spirit of God, open the eyes of our understandings, and shed abroad this divine love in our hearts; “ that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God!”

“ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”†

\* Psalm xxxvi. 6, 7. † Ephesians iii. 17—21.

# TWO DISCOURSES

## TO SEAMEN:

VIZ.

### I. Praising God the duty and privilege of Seamen:

DELIVERED AT WHITBY, MARCH 10, 1816;

*A few days before the sailing of the Ships for Greenland, and  
other foreign parts:*

AND

### II. Christ the Seaman's Friend:

DELIVERED FEBRUARY 7, 1819;

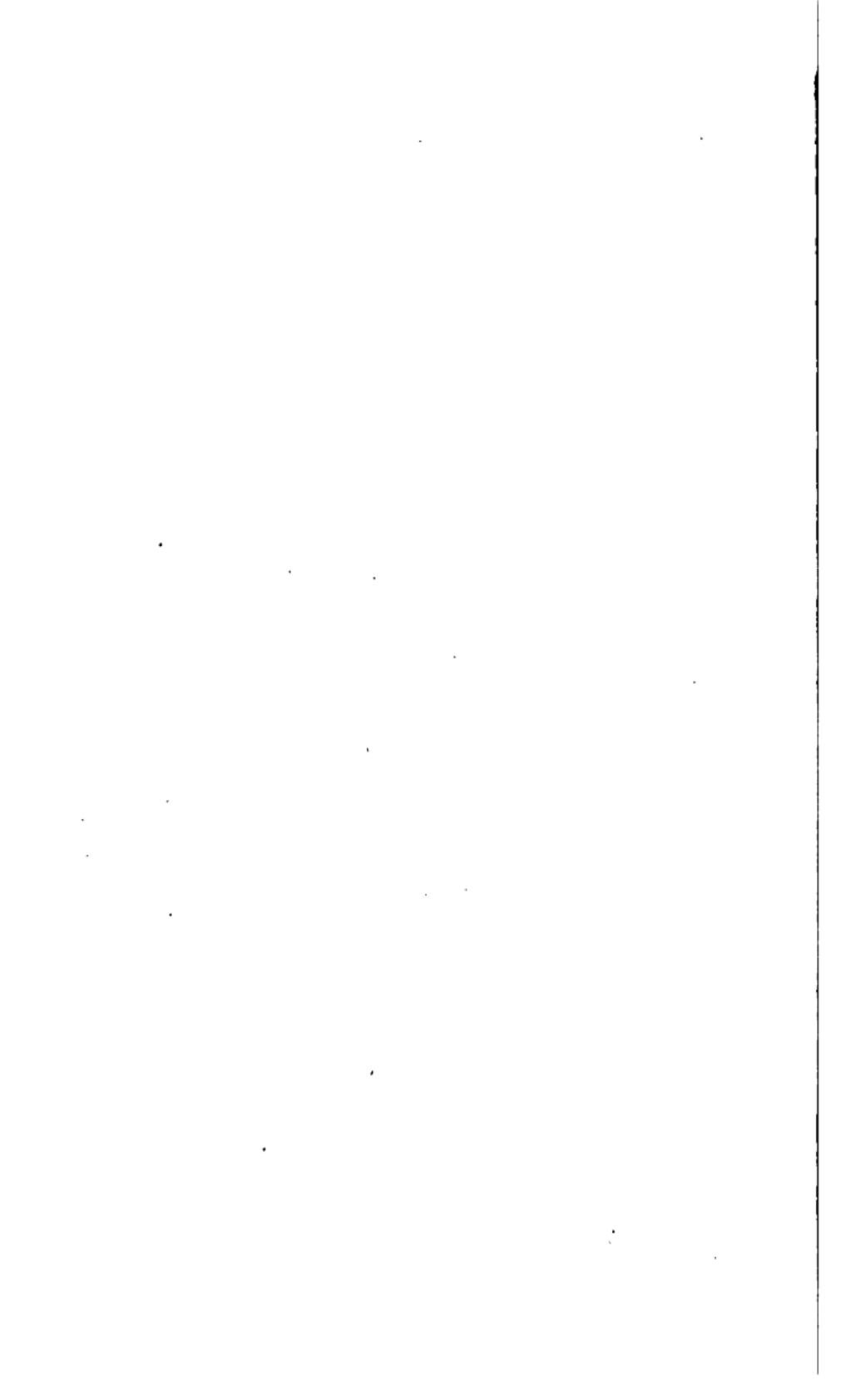
*After the melancholy news of the death of Mr. John Trueman,  
Master of the Harmony of Whitby, and his brother-in-law,  
Robert Jackson, who, together with all the crew of that  
vessel, the Mate excepted, were lost near Tralee on  
the west coast of Ireland, January 17, 1819.*

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME

### PRAYERS AND HYMNS,

TO BE USED AT SEA.



## DISCOURSE I.

PRAISING GOD THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF SEAMEN.

ISAIAH XLII. 10.

SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG, AND HIS PRAISE  
FROM THE END OF THE EARTH, YE THAT GO DOWN  
TO THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS THEREIN; THE  
ISLES, AND THE INHABITANTS THEREOF.

The religion of Jesus is obviously fitted to become universal; for, while its grand doctrines, duties, and institutions are adapted to the instruction, direction, and salvation, of mankind in general, the sacred volume, in which they are exhibited, conveys also a vast variety of special admonitions, intended for each particular class of society, that men of every rank and description may feel a greater interest in this blessed book. The high and the low, the young and the old, men of every condition and every occupation, may all find portions here, expressly appropriated to themselves.

Of this we have a pleasing illustration in the passage before us. The prophet, who speaks much of gospel times and gospel blessings, is foretelling the coming of Christ, and the erection and extension of

his kingdom ; and, while he describes the blessings to be diffused through the world under the reign of Immanuel, he invites men of every place, and every employment, to welcome his coming, and rejoices in his salvation.

Among the different classes of men, called to such delightful exercises, we find the inhabitants of the isles, especially those who go down to the sea. In verse 4th, it is predicted, that "the isles shall wait for Christ's law ;" in the 12th verse, men are exhorted to "declare his praise in the islands ;" and in the words of our text, the people of the isles, particularly seamen, are invited to sing new songs of praise, to the honour of a redeeming God ; "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein the isles, and the inhabitants thereof."

In reading such passages in the writings of the ancient prophets, we can scarcely fail to be impressed with the idea, that the Spirit of God, in dictating these words, had an eye to the period when the British isles would take a prominent part in enlarging the kingdom of Christ, and British seamen would be distinguished by their love to his name. At any rate such parts of the holy scriptures must be peculiarly interesting to us the inhabitants of the isles ; and most of all, to our sailors, who go down to the sea in ships, and are often visiting the ends of the earth.

Unto you, then, my sea-faring friends, the language of the text is especially addressed. You have

a double interest in it ; for you are not only inhabitants of the isles, the highly favoured British isles, but you are employed on the great waters, and visit far distant islands, and coasts, even the remotest ends of the earth. Listen, therefore, to these words, as spoken by God unto you in particular. Doubtless the Spirit of the Lord intended them for your profit; and O that the same Spirit may apply them to the heart of every seaman now present, that you may all joyfully comply with this exhortation, and have cause to bless God that ever it was penned ! “ Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein ; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.”

In addressing you further from these words, let me FIRST, take notice of some things implied, or presupposed, in this exhortation ; SECONDLY, direct your thoughts to the exhortation itself ; and THIRDLY, propose some directions or admonitions, that may serve, by the divine blessing, to assist and excite you in obeying it.

I. I shall take notice of some things implied, or presupposed, in this exhortation to seamen, the seamen of the isles.—It evidently presupposes some things of high importance, to which it is proper to advert, before we take a nearer view of the exhortation itself.—It implies that,

1. Seamen are peculiarly welcome to receive the gospel.—They are here invited to praise God for gospel blessings ; and this clearly intimates, that they are admitted to receive them; nay, our text may be viewed

as a gracious offer of that salvation, in which they are exhorted to rejoice. Who can be more welcome to come unto Christ, than seamen and fishermen? Among such our Saviour often lived and preached, from such he chose his apostles and first ministers ; and, by putting such an honour on the sea-faring life, he has kindly encouraged those who pursue it, to seek his salvation, and love his name. In like manner, a number of passages in the sacred volume are evidently designed to lead the minds of seamen unto the Lord, as the God of their salvation, who is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea : and many of these passages are in the book of Psalms, to indicate that seamen are particularly invited to sing the songs of Zion. Often too are spiritual blessings described in metaphors borrowed from objects with which seamen are familiar, to teach them, that such blessings are intended for them.

Be assured, then, my dear seamen, that the God of peace is offering his salvation to you in particular. "To you is the word of this salvation sent :" to you are presented the blessings of pardon, peace, grace, glory ; with all the rest of those invaluable benefits which Jesus bought with his blood. O that you would listen to his voice, and accept his generous offers !—But the exhortation implies that,

2. Many seamen will receive the gospel with their hearts.—When God invites them to praise him in new songs, he does not mean that they are to yield him only the services of their lips; for what are these,

if the heart be withheld ? He calls on seamen to praise him with their whole souls ; admiring, adoring, and loving him. The text, therefore, may be regarded as a prophecy, that many seamen in gospel times will truly seek the Lord, and have their hearts tuned for the celebration of his praises. Predictions to the same effect occur in other passages of this book ; particularly at the beginning of the 60th chapter, where it is said to the church ; " Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.—And the gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising : —the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee.—Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows ? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee." In these words it is foretold, that under the new dispensation, Zion shall be enriched with the abundance of the sea, that the isles shall wait for God, and that the ships of Tarshish shall be the first to bring sons and daughters to the church : not only intimating, that seamen shall be of essential service in the conversion of the gentiles, as they now are by conveying ministers, bibles, and other means of salvation, to distant lands ; but that numbers of themselves shall receive the offers of the gospel, and form an important addition to the church. And, blessed be God ! many

pious seamen have lived in various ages, many may be found in the present day, and many more, I trust, will hereafter embrace the offers of Jesus, and be filled with joy and peace in believing. O that you, who now hear these words, may help to swell the happy band, to the praise of the glory of divine grace, and your own exceeding and eternal joy!—But this leads me to notice, that this exhortation also implies, that,

3. The gospel will be a source of joy unspeakable to seamen who embrace it.—Singing is a joyful exercise, and when seamen are called to sing new songs, this intimates, that they shall have matter for songs, delightful themes, that will fill their hearts with gladness, and their mouths with praise. And truly the gospel supplies such animating themes in rich abundance. Nothing on earth can yield such real, and exquisite, and lasting pleasures. “Fear not,” said the angel who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, “Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” And, presently after, the heavenly choir began to sing in transporting strains; “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.” Well may seamen rejoice, well may the inhabitants of the isles be glad, if they have received this great salvation. To be delivered from the wrath to come, reconciled unto God, admitted into his family, and made heirs of everlasting felicity, are blessings that infinitely surpass the low and transient joys of time. May all these blessings be yours, by faith in Christ!

Such are the principal things implied in this exhortation.

II. I would now direct your thoughts to the exhortation itself. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein ; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof."—Here, my dear seamen, your duty and your privilege are laid down together ; your duty, to praise the God of salvation ; your privilege, to have an employment so delightful. The exhortation may be divided into three parts :

1. You are exhorted to praise the Lord : "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth."—No service can be more reasonable than the praise of God. He made us for himself, formed us to shew forth his praise ; and being wholly his property, indebted to him for being, and for all our enjoyments, we are bound to glorify him with our bodies and our spirits, which are his : according to the apostle's admonition ; "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."\* And who can be under stronger obligations to praise him than seamen ? Ye who go down to the sea, who behold the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep, who commit your lives so much to his immediate disposal, and are so often experiencing his delivering goodness ; on you is this duty peculiarly binding. Do not the very elements, the winds, the waves, the tempests, and all the striking wonders

\* 1 Corinthians x. 31.

of nature which you frequently witness, seem to vie with each other, which will best proclaim the Creator's glory? And will you, who see so much of his works, and enjoy so many distinguishing favours, refuse to raise the song of thanksgiving?

Brethren, let me urge you to praise the Lord in every possible way. Praise him with your hearts; for here his praise must begin, and the sweetest hymns will be nothing but unmeaning sound, if they be not accompanied with the homage of the soul. Render him that admiration and fear, that gratitude and love, and all those holy affections, which are due unto his name; and without which there can be no devotion.

Praise him with your lips. This is what the text expressly requires, for it calls you to sing songs to his honour. Sailors are often fond of singing; and let them not learn profane or licentious songs, but those sweet psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, in the singing of which they will make melody in their heart to the Lord. No where do the songs of Zion sound more sweetly, than when they rise from the face of the deep. The charming accents, floating on the gale, seem to make the azure vault of heaven to resound: angels listen to the grateful music; nay, it ascends to the throne of God, like a fragrant perfume; accepted through the merits of Christ, the seaman's friend. Happy would it be for seamen, were every ship like a floating temple, daily gladdened with the praises of the Most High!

Prayer is another exercise of the highest import-

ance, for God's honour and our own interests; and it is one of the best modes of praising him; for our adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, are all calculated to magnify his name. Seamen should abound in prayer; especially as they have better opportunities for this duty, than for singing psalms. My brethren, forget not to call upon God, when you are afar off upon the sea: let him hear your voice every morning; and again, when night returns, let your prayer come up before him as incense, the lifting up of your hands as the evening sacrifice. "Come boldly unto the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."\* Communion with God will be more than a substitute for the company of your dearest relations.

Praise him also with your lives. Without this, the services of the lips can be of no utility, as they must needs be insincere. We only insult God, if we profess to praise him in songs or prayers, while our temper and actions give the lie to our professions. Let your praises be embodied in your conduct, and your whole life be like one continued act of devotion.

2. You are exhorted to praise him in gospel songs, emphatically stiled *new songs*. "Sing unto the Lord a new song."—Gospel songs are often in scripture denominated *new*; because they belong to the new dispensation, and relate to new and glorious themes, which will never become antiquated, and never be exhausted. Such, brethren, are the songs which it

\* Hebrews iv. 16.

is your privilege and your duty to sing ; drawing near to God by that new and living way, which Jesus hath consecrated for us by his own blood. You live under that blessed dispensation, which displays the love of God in Christ to a lost world, in the most glorious form : and, while you sing of his wonders in creation and providence, let the nobler wonders of redeeming love inspire your hearts with warmer gratitude, and call forth more elevated strains of praise. " O sing unto the Lord a new song ; for he hath done marvellous things : his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation :—all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."\* Sing unto him, not only as the God of nature, but the God of grace ; not only as your Creator and Preserver, but as your great Redeemer. Praise him for sending his salvation to the British isles, and to British seamen. Rejoice in the offers of his love, the promises of his covenant, and all the unsearchable riches of his salvation ; which will not only yield sweet songs to his people on earth, until the end of time ; but furnish abundant matter for the songs of the redeemed above,—songs that are ever new, eternal in the heavens.

3. You are exhorted to praise him afar off, as well as at home. " Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein." All that go down to the sea, and all that are therein, whenever

\* Psalm xciii. 1—3.

they are doing business in great waters, are invited to sing unto the Lord ; and, when they are among distant islands, and in the remotest ends of the earth, even from thence they must proclaim the praises of Jehovah.—There are some sailors who behave with propriety under the eye of their friends at home, but as soon as they go to sea, all their goodness and their piety are left behind ; and, when they visit foreign parts, instead of glorifying God among the heathen, their conduct is a reproach to their country and their religion, and through their wickedness “ the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles.” Beware, my sea-faring friends, lest this should be the case with any of you. Never neglect your sabbaths, your bibles, your prayers, your sacred songs ; never desert the ways of holiness ; but study, even in the ends of the earth, to praise the God of salvation, leading a life of piety, integrity, and temperance. Is not the Lord, whom you are invited to praise and serve, the God of the sea, as much as of the land ; the God of the whole earth, as well as of Britain ? Is he not present in Greenland, and other ends of the earth, as much as in this town ? And do you not, in all quarters of the globe, behold his glory, and taste his rich bounty ? Your opportunities for worshipping God are often much limited, when you are at sea, or in foreign ports ; but resolve that you will praise him unto the ends of the earth, and make the shores of distant islands and continents re-echo the cheerful songs of Zion.—What a happy privilege is it, to enjoy the presence

of the Lord at all times and in all places, and to have sweet communion with him daily, as your God in Christ !—Having endeavoured to illustrate the exhortation in the text,

III. I proceed to offer you some directions or admonitions, that may serve, by the divine blessing, to assist and excite you in obeying it.—And,

1. Consider that God himself here speaks to you, and that he speaks to you for your good.—This blessed book is the word of the living God ; all that Isaiah and the other prophets wrote, they wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and, among other precious truths, he caused this kind address to seamen, the seamen of the isles, to be written for their benefit in future ages. Some thousands of years have elapsed since it was penned ; yet it stands here for your good, and the good of other British seamen, for whose benefit it was doubtless intended. And who can tell, what good these words of God may do to your souls ? O that the thoughts of his glory and grace, and of his kindness to seamen in particular, may draw your hearts towards him, that you may rejoice to celebrate his praise, and live to his honour !

2. Consider that you have always good reason to praise him.—There are times when seamen are tempted to murmur at the ways of providence. When they are out of employment, or have reduced wages ; when they meet with severe losses or disappointments ; or when, in other respects, their hardships are more than common ; they are apt to complain of their hard

lot. But, my brethren, whatever may be your trials and difficulties, you have always causes of gratitude to God ; and you must learn to praise him at all times, as well as in all places. "I will sing of mercy and judgment," says the psalmist: \* and we should all bless God amidst judgments, as well as mercies. If your intended voyages succeed not to your wishes, think not that God is doing you injustice. Were strict justice done you, instead of receiving any blessing, you would be punished with everlasting destruction. If, therefore, you meet with adversity, bless God that your case is not worse ; and praise him especially for his glorious gospel, which supplies us with rich consolations in times of trouble, and assures us, that all things work together for good to them that love God. Happy are they who can sing the new songs of Zion even in the night of affliction.—To lead you to this happiness, I would say,

3. Seek to be intimately acquainted with that blessed gospel, from whence our new songs are furnished.—All the delightful themes of which we are to sing, are found in the sacred volume ; and if we know not its contents, how can we sing our gospel songs ? If you would know how to praise the Lord, read your bible. Let no one go to sea without this precious book ; and let it not lie neglected in your chest, but make it your daily companion. If it be duly improved, you will find it your most trusty friend, your safest guide, your kindest comforter, and your ablest helper:

\* Psalm ci. 1.

it will give light to your eyes, joy to your hearts, and strength to your whole souls.—I would therefore say farther,

4. Look to God for grace to improve the gospel.—So blind are our understandings, and so perverse our hearts, through the influence of corruption, that we can make little progress in the study of the scriptures, without divine illumination ; and our knowledge will be of small service, if we have not grace to make a proper use of it. When you read the bible, then, look up to its divine Author for light and life; that you may see its beauty, taste its sweetness, and find it to be the power of God unto your salvation. Blessed are they who are taught of God, and whose hearts are tuned by his grace, to celebrate his praise.

5. Beware of every thing that would unfit you for praising him.—Here I would caution you against all sin, especially the sins that most easily beset you. Beware of profane swearing ; for there is nothing more inconsistent with praising God, than blaspheming his name, or cursing our fellow-men. Remember what the apostle James says, in speaking of the sins of the tongue : “ It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father ; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”\* What can be more incongruous, than to mix the language of hell with the voice of devotion ?—Beware of pride and vain-glory. If God crown your

\* James iii. 8—11.

voyage with success, as I hope he will, boast not of your own talents and courage and perseverance; but give all the honour unto God, on whose blessing your success depends. Those who delight in praising themselves cannot be in a proper frame for praising God.—Beware of drunkenness; that beastly sin, which degrades and ruins both soul and body. Through this odious vice, many a gallant ship has been lost, and many a precious soul has perished. If you would praise God, “be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.”—In short, let me caution you against all manner of iniquity, that you may glorify God by a holy life; living soberly, righteously, and godly.

Lastly. Consider the importance of making the most of your present opportunities.—To you, my dear seamen, every moment is precious. You are going from hence on the face of the waters; and who can tell what may beset you there? Who knows whether you may have another opportunity of hearing the word of God? In every year, many who leave this port never return: and that may be the case this year with some now before me. O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace. I commend you also to the care of his holy providence. May the eye of Omniscience watch over you, and the hand of Omnipotence shield you! May goodness and mercy attend you in this voyage, and follow you all the days of your life; and may we all dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, to sing the songs that are ever new!

## DISCOURSE II.

CHRIST THE SEAMAN'S FRIEND.

MATTHEW VIII. 24, 25, 26.

AND, BEHOLD, THERE AROSE A GREAT TEMPEST IN THE SEA, INSOMUCH THAT THE SHIP WAS COVERED WITH THE WAVES: BUT HE WAS ASLEEP. AND HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO HIM, AND AWOKE HIM, SAYING, LORD, SAVE US: WE PERISH. AND HE SAITH UNTO THEM, WHY ARE YE FEARFUL? O YE OF LITTLE FAITH! THEN HE REBUKED THE WINDS AND THE SEA, AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM.

We have here a very memorable passage in the life of Christ. Not long after his sermon on the mount, he was crossing the sea of Galilee with his disciples in a small vessel, and their voyage was attended with some remarkable circumstances. They had sailed but a little way, when they had to encounter a mighty tempest that arose in the sea: their ship was tossed by the fierce winds, and lashed by the foaming waves, which sometimes completely covered it; so that, being nearly full of water, it was in danger of foundering. In the mean time Christ was asleep, resting on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship, as Mark informs us; and his sleep was so sound, that neither the winds nor the waves disturbed him; till the disciples, who were in the

utmost consternation, awoke him with their loud cries, saying, "Lord save us: we perish." Upon this the Saviour arose, not in agitation and alarm, but with a dignified composure of spirit; and looking round him with all the majesty of the Son of God, he first reproved his terrified disciples, saying, "Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!" and then, in a tone of divine authority, he rebuked the winds and the sea, saying, "Peace, be still." And now, wonderful to tell! the elements instantly obeyed his voice; the raging storm was hushed, the swelling billows subsided, "and there was a great calm." Such a display of almighty power could not fail to make a strong impression on all the beholders; "The men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

This narrative is interesting to every lover of our Lord Jesus Christ; but most of all to those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters: and it is chiefly for the sake of seamen, and their relations, that I have selected these verses for my text on the present occasion. My brethren, God is teaching us, by the events of his providence, the great uncertainty of our lives; especially of the lives of seamen, who are in jeopardy every hour. Instance after instance is occurring, to remind seamen that they walk on the verge of eternity; and to remind the relations of seamen, that they must humbly commit them to the disposal of a gracious God, and be ever ready to part with them at his call. Some very affecting

warnings of this description have lately been given you ; and in particular, a most melancholy instance of shipwreck has taken place, by which two of our friends and fellow-worshippers, with others belonging to this town and neighbourhood, were overwhelmed together in the waves. This mournful dispensation, with other recent events of the same painful nature, may well be expected to make a deep impression on every heart. I trust that our dear young friends, though lost to us, have experienced everlasting going, and that the waves which swept them away from this world, have wafted them to the shores above. And may I not also hope, that God has designed these awful calamities for the good of survivors ; that many may flee to Christ as their Saviour, and to the Lord as their God, for their eternal salvation ? May God bless the observations that are now to be made, for comforting mourners, alarming the careless, and exciting all to prepare for eternity ! And O that seamen in particular, to whom these warnings are peculiarly directed, may be stirred up to seek everlasting life, through faith in Christ, the seaman's friend !

There are several precious truths in my text, interesting to us all, especially to seamen and their relatives, whose attention I would earnestly invite to the following propositions contained in this passage. May the Spirit of God impress them on your hearts !

I. Seamen are exposed to the most awful dangers.--- This is a truth so well known to you, that I need scarcely stop to illustrate it. We have a lively descrip-

tion of the perils of the sea in these well known words of the psalmist: " He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves. They (the seamen) mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble; They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end."\* Such was now the frightful situation of the disciples: " Behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves;" and the disciples began to look upon themselves as dead men, ready to perish in the deep.

Awful are the dangers which seamen have to face. Their case is fearful in the extreme, when the furious winds attack them from above, and the raging billows from below, as if the elements were contending which could destroy them first; while their frail bark is tossed about on the mighty ocean, or driven towards a lee shore: especially when, as in the case of the disciples, the horrors of the tempest are increased by the darkness of the night. Ah! my friends, when we lie safely in our beds, or sit comfortably by our fire-sides in a stormy night, we little know the sufferings and perils of poor mariners, amidst howling tempests, dashing billows, hideous rocks, and treacherous shoals. And when we think in how many instances such dangers prove fatal, as they did to our dear departed friends, we need not wonder if the trembling sufferers cry out, in the midst of their terrors, " Lord, save us; we perish."—But I observe,

\* Psalm civ. 25—27.

II. Christ goes to sea with his disciples, and is present in all their perils.—It was the safety of the apostles at this time, as at other times, that Christ was with them: and on a future occasion, when he did not embark with them, they still found him at hand to help them: for, in the hour of danger, he came to them walking on the waters, and the moment he came on board, the storm ceased.\*

Here is a rich source of comfort for all godly seamen: wherever they go, they have Christ with them. Jesus still goes to sea with all his real disciples: and to whatever part of the globe they may have to bend their course, whatever seas they may cross, he is ever near them, ever with them, attending them in all their dangers and hardships; and when no earthly friend can bring them relief, he is present to aid and comfort them. What a blessed privilege is this, my dear seamen, to have Christ himself at sea with you! If you belong to Christ, he will go with you in all your voyages, he will accompany you in all your perils. You have not Christ in the ship with you in respect of his bodily presence, as the disciples had, for the heavens must contain him until the times of the restitution of all things; yet he is with you really, and powerfully, and graciously; according to his kind promise, made when he was just going to ascend to heaven, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”†

Here too is a source of consolation for you, my christian friends, who have relations that go to sea.

\* Matthew xiv. 22—33. † Matthew xxviii. 20.

Your dear relations go far from you, and are long out of your sight ; but be of good cheer, they cannot for a moment be out of Jesus' sight. When they need, but cannot obtain, your company and your friendly aid, Christ is ever near them ; and his presence, his help, and his sweet consolations, will more than compensate for the want of yours. Nay more, if death should overtake them, either by disease or by accident, in some distant part of the earth or of the sea, where you cannot attend them in their last moments, nor have any opportunity of closing their eyes ; let this refresh you amidst your bitter sorrows, that our kind Redeemer is present with all his dying friends, to cheer them in crossing the floods of death, and land them safe in his heavenly kingdom. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."—Yet,

III. There are times when Christ, for wise and gracious ends, seems to take no notice of the dangers of his people.—While the disciples were seized with the most alarming terrors, and appeared to be on the brink of destruction, Jesus was fast asleep ; " he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow ;" as is elsewhere stated ;\* like one who felt no interest in the fate of the apostles. It was not surprising that Christ should fall asleep, for it was now the night season, and he had had a fatiguing day ; but it was strange that he should sleep in such a storm, as if he had no regard for his personal safety, nor for the lives of his disciples. They cried out to him in their alarm, "Master, carest thou not that we perish ?" It seemed as

\* Mark iv. 38.

If he took no notice of their awful situation, and did not care whether they should sink or swim : at least, his conduct appeared very singular and mysterious.

And such, my friends, is the manner in which Christ acts towards his people on various occasions. Often does he hide his face from them, and seem to turn a deaf ear to their supplications, like one asleep; and they call upon him with earnest cries, saying, " Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord ? Arise for our help."\*—But think you, that he can ever be unconcerned about the state of his people ? No, my brethren, it is impossible. Christ was very far from being regardless of the dangers of his disciples ; but he slept in the storm, to try their faith, to make them more earnest in prayer, and to render their deliverance more surprising and more joyful. In like manner, it is for wise and gracious purposes, that he sometimes hides his face from others of his people, amidst sore trials, or imminent dangers. He knows best what is for his own glory and our good; whether life or death, whether deliverance or disappointment ; and therefore, though his ways should be dark and mysterious, and he should seem to sleep amidst the stormy troubles that overtake us, let us not fancy that he does not care for us, but leave it to himself to hear and to answer us, at his own time, and in his own way.—Hence I observe,

IV. In the hour of danger we should betake ourselves to the Lord in earnest prayer.—This was the resource of the disciples in their present extremity: they awoke their divine Master with loud cries, saying,

\* Psalm xlii. 23, 26.

"Lord, save us : we perish." Christ's being asleep served, as it was intended, to render them more earnest in crying to him for deliverance. If the Lord appear to withdraw himself, let not this discourage us from approaching his throne of grace, but rather make our applications the more fervent.

This, my brethren, is your best relief in times of danger. Go to the throne of grace, and humbly beg the divine protection. What a mercy is it, that Christ is ever near, to hear and to bless you; that he is mighty to save, and full of compassion ! He can save you from perishing in the waters, if your deliverance consist with the purposes of his glory and grace ; and, if not, he can save your precious souls from everlasting perdition. And, O that you were as sensible of the perils that threaten your souls, as of those which endanger your bodies ! If you are living in unbelief and sin, your souls are exposed to dangers far more alarming than those of the sea ; and were you awakened to see your doomed state, to see the dreadful storms of wrath that are ready to overwhelm you for ever, you would flee to Christ for deliverance, crying out, like the disciples, "Lord, save us ; we perish." O think, how much more important is the salvation of the soul, than that of the body ; and while you are solicitous for the one, beware of neglecting the other ! Pray not only for temporal mercies, but for those which are spiritual and eternal : and pray in the season of health and safety, as well as in the hour of alarm. If you trust in Christ for the salvation of your souls, and come daily to the

throne of grace for spiritual blessings, you will be encouraged to approach it boldly in the greatest dangers; nay, you will feel a blessed assurance, that if your bodies should sink in the waves, your souls shall land safely on the heavenly shores.—To encourage you in prayer, I remark further,

V. The winds and the waves are wholly under the control of Christ.—When Christ had reproved his trembling disciples, he turned round and rebuked the winds and the sea; saying to them in a commanding tone, “ Peace, be still.” And lo! at the voice of his rebuke, the boisterous winds were instantly stilled, and the raging waves shrunk down to their wonted level, as if terrified at his mandate, and unable to abide his frown. So instantaneous was the effect, so quickly did the fierce tempest give way to a great calm, that the disciples were filled with astonishment and awe: “ The men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”

My dear seamen, here is another encouragement for you, amidst the perils of a sea-faring life. Jesus whom you are called to receive as your Saviour, has the entire command of the elements: all things are put under his feet; and he is Lord of the sea, and of the dry land. The loud winds cannot blow, nor the foaming billows swell, but by his permission and direction; and when they have risen to their greatest pitch of fury, he can still them in a moment. All their rage and violence, all their dreadful effects, are under his control; and they can do nothing but what he allows

and commands them. They cannot sink you, they cannot hurt you, till he gives them orders to that effect. We are wont to say, that you are at the mercy of the winds and waves; but it is not so; you are never in their power for a single moment; you are wholly at the disposal of Christ, whose servants they are, and whose orders they implicitly obey.

This consideration may not only operate as an encouragement to seamen, but serve also to comfort their relations, amidst the anxieties which they feel on their account. You that have a part of your family at sea, be not disturbed on their account, as if they were abandoned to the rage of the elements: they are all in the hands of Christ, and you may safely entrust them to his care; for the winds and waves are wholly at his call, and can do nothing without his orders.

This too may furnish consolation to you, my sorrowful friends; whose hearts are distressed for the loss of dear relations, who have sunk among the waves. It was not the voice of the tempest that called them hence, but the voice of Him who rules the tempest; it was not the rage of the sea that prevailed against them, but the will of Him whom the sea obeys; it was not by chance that you were so soon and so suddenly bereaved of them, but by the sovereign command of the Lord, who removes us and ours into the world of spirits, at what time, and in what way, he sees best. Fret not then at these mournful dispensations: they are ordered by Him who does all things well. The winds and waves submitted without a murmur; and

will you be more refractory than they ? He says to your tumultuous thoughts, your troubled spirits, as he said to them, " Peace ; be still. Be still, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."\* His ways are often dark and mysterious ; but they are all wise and holy ; nay, they are all good and merciful, to them that love him, and trust in his name.—As an additional encouragement, I proceed to remark,

VI. Were our faith sufficiently strong, we should not be alarmed in the greatest dangers.—Christ rebuked the fears of his apostles, before he quelled the winds and the waves : " Why are ye fearful ? O ye of little faith ?" It was owing to the weakness of their faith, that they felt such terror; had they firmly trusted in Christ as their divine Saviour, who is Lord of the winds and the sea, they might have looked undismayed on all the dangers with which they were surrounded. Had they fully believed in the power and grace of their Lord, and considered that he himself was in the ship with them, they need not have been discomposed ; for he was both able and willing to ward off every calamity, and it was impossible that the ship could sink with Christ on board.

In like manner, if our faith were strong, nothing could greatly alarm us : a believing view of the promises of God, and of the presence and all-sufficiency of Christ, might banish every fear. If the Lord doth

\* Psalm xlii. 10. 1 Peter v. 6.

our side, we may boldly say, in the words of the prophet, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid."\* What have we to fear? The greatest dangers that can meet us, whether arising from accidents, from the rage of the elements, from the fury of wicked men, or the malice of devils, can do nothing to us but what our kind redeeming God pleases; and therefore it is certain, that they will do us no real harm; for "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God;"† and he will suffer nothing to befall us, but what he will render conducive to our happiness.

Learn then, my brethren, to live by the faith of the Son of God; and this will enable you to face the greatest perils with undaunted resolution. Faith invigorates, ennobles, and exalts the mind, raising it above the fear of losses and disappointments, of pain and death; and when our sky is overcast with black and lowering clouds, the keen eye of faith can pierce through the gloom, and discern the beams of the Sun of righteousness shining on the further side, ready to break through and refresh the soul. Away with unbecoming apprehensions. If Christ be yours, you can not suffer, except when suffering will be a blessing to you: you cannot lose, except when loss will be your greatest gain: you cannot be disappointed, except when disappointment is for your real interest: you cannot die, except at God's time and in God's way, which must be the best; and death, when it comes, will not meet you as an enemy, but as a kind friend,

\* Isaiah xii. 2. † Romans viii. 28.

to introduce you into the mansions of glory and joy. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Neither dangers, nor accidents, nor shipwreck, nor death, can ever tear us from the Saviour's love.\*

And you also, my weeping friends, who are mourning for the loss of dear relations, seek to cherish a lively faith in the God of salvation, in the kind sympathizing Redeemer, who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities; and this faith will support your drooping spirits, and sooth the anguish of your hearts. The eye of faith, directed to the Saviour, will see, that, while he smites, he loves; while he frowns, he is gracious; and, while he snatches from us our sweetest earthly joys, it is to give us more full, more exquisite, more solid joys, in himself as our portion. The arms of faith will cling to a redeeming God, amidst his severest strokes; and, when bereft of every friend but himself, the believing soul will say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." O that this strong faith may support you under your load of grief! And may this faith work by love to his name; that your will may be subdued into a calm acquiescence in the will of God, that your whole affections may be drawn around him as their centre, and all your sorrows be swallowed up in love to himself! Then will you be able to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth;" my kindred and friends

\* Romans viii. 31—39.

die ; “ but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”\*

And now, my hearers, you perceive on the whole, from this subject, that Christ is the seaman's Friend. O that every seaman present, may receive him, and trust in him, as his Friend, and his Redeemer ! My dear brethren, how can you think of going to sea, without being at friendship with Jesus, whose sovereign sway extends over every part of the ocean, and whose favour and presence alone can make you happy in all your voyages ? If you are strangers to this gracious Saviour, O resolve to be so no longer ! Live not another day in unbelief and sin ; no more neglect the great salvation. Has not this generous Redeemer come down from heaven to earth, to accomplish our deliverance ? Has he not, for our sakes, passed through seas of trouble and anguish, bearing the load of our guilt, suffering as an atoning sacrifice for our sins ? Is he not kindly inviting us to receive his salvation, as the gift of free grace ? Is he not encouraging seamen in particular, to come to him as their Friend and Saviour ? Why, then, would you treat him with contempt ? Why break his laws, disregard his gracious words, grieve his Spirit, and spurn at his astonishing love ? Sailors are often commended as men of generous hearts ; and think, O, my brethren, how ungenerous it would be, to requite all the love of this kind Saviour with base ingratitude ! Surely, if you have a spark of true generosity in your breast, ye will vex him no more ;

\* Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

but be melted into contrition, warmed with gratitude, and drawn to him by the power of his love.

To young seamen I might especially address myself on this occasion; for our dear departed friends have gone in their early years;\* but, having so lately spoken to young seamen, on a like melancholy occasion,† I shall merely remind you, my young friends, of the vast importance of seeking Christ betimes. When I think how many youths who have received instruction within these walls, have been cut off in their bloom, how can I forbear to urge and entreat you to come to Jesus, for your eternal salvation? This gracious Saviour, who is the Friend of seamen, is particularly kind to the young: "I love them that love me," he says, "and those that seek me early shall find me."‡ O seek him without delay! You cannot be safe, you cannot be happy, till you receive Christ as your Saviour, and the Lord as your God; and as you know not how soon your opportunities may be over, not a day should be lost. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

God grant that you may all hasten to the Saviour of sinners, that you may be filled with joy and peace in believing!—To him be glory, now and for ever. Amen.

\* Mr. Trueman was only 26 years of age, and Mr. Jackson had not completed his 20th year. Several of their fellow-sufferers were also very young. † See a Sermon by the Author, entitled THE DEATH OF A YOUNG SEAMAN BEWAILED AND IMPROVED. ‡ Proverbs viii. 17.

## PRAYERS TO BE USED AT SEA.

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### I: A PRAYER AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF A VOYAGE.

O thou glorious God, who hast made the sea and the dry land, and whose kingdom ruleth over all! Thou hast created us, and hitherto upheld us; and many are the favours which we have received from thy bountiful hand. And now, O Lord, while we are leaving these shores, and launching forth into the deep, we humbly commit ourselves to thy gracious care. Thou knowest, that we are unworthy of the least of thy mercies; for we have sinned against thee times without number, and have oft abused thy richest benefits: yet, O thou God of salvation! we would beg thy blessing on our intended voyage, for the sake of Jesus thy dear Son, in whom thou art well pleased. For his sake, blot out our iniquities, and shew us thy loving-kindness. We are now removed from the company of our dearest friends and relations; be thou our Friend, our Father, and our God. O let thy presence attend us, in every sea, and on every shore! May thy blessing rest also on those dear relations whom we have left behind. While we are far from them, be thou near them, to enrich them with thy grace; and, if it be thy will, grant that we may meet them again, in peace and comfort.

We commit unto thee, O God, the care of our souls, as well as of our bodies. Preserve us not only from danger, but from sin; and when temptations come in our way, help us to resist them in the strength

of thy grace. O that in every place, and at every time, we may fear thy name, and live as in thy sight! O that each of us may earnestly seek thy great salvation; trusting in the merits of Christ's atoning blood for the pardon of our sins, and relying on the riches of thy grace manifested in his cross! O thou kind redeeming God! unto thy mercy we desire to flee; unto thee we betake ourselves for refuge. Glorify thyself in our salvation; make us the monuments of thy rich grace; that we may praise thee for the wonders of thy love; both in time and through eternity. Lord, we would dedicate ourselves unto thee; we would embark in that blessed voyage which leads to everlasting life. O breathe upon our souls the refreshing gales of thy Holy Spirit!

And now, Lord, we commend ourselves to thee, and to the word of thy grace. Thou only knowest, whether we shall again see our native shores; or return no more. But, O Father of mercies; we resign ourselves into thy hands; and humbly beg that we may be thine through life, thine at death, and thine for evermore. Hear these our unworthy supplications and forgive, and accept us; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

## 2. A MORNING PRAYER AT SEA.

O Lord! thou art a great God, and a great King above all gods. In thine hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is thine also. The sea is thine; for thou madest it; and thine bands formed the dry land. The day is thine; the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun; and makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thy mercies are new unto us every morning,

W<sup>e</sup> thank thee, O our God ! that thou hast watched over us through the night ; that thou hast protected both those who were asleep, and those who were awake ; and that we have not run into any fatal dangers, during the hours of darkness. O that we may this day live unto the Lord, the God of our mercies ! May thy grace go with us, that our hands may not commit iniquity, that our lips may not utter perverse things, and that our hearts may not cherish wicked passions. Forgive, O God, the sins of the past night and morning : for alas ! we are daily offending thee. Wash our souls in the blood of Christ, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. For his sake, grant us thy blessing this day. Carry us safely on in our course, if it be thy will : and whatever difficulties and dangers may be before us, help us to meet them with patience and fortitude, with humility and faith. May we be in the fear of the Lord all the day long ; living continually under the guidance of thy holy word, and spending each day as if it were our last ; as becomes those whose life is so precarious. And since thou art daily loading us with thy benefits, O may we daily grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ! To whom be glory now and for ever. Amen.

### 3. EVENING PRAYER AT SEA.

O thou God of majesty and glory, who art exalted above all blessing and praise ! we thank thee, that we these unworthy creatures, are permitted to approach thy throne, and are encouraged to send up our prayer unto thee from the face of the waters. Lord, when we consider thy wonders in the heaven above, and

in the deep beneath, we may well cry out in astonishment, " What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ?" We praise thee, O Lord God ! for thy condescending love, in opening to us a new and living way, by which we may draw near unto thee. And now, Lord, we plead, that, through the merits and intercession of our dear Redeemer, our prayer may come before thee, as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Pardon, we beseech thee, the many sins of the past day ; whether in thought, in word, or in action. Blot them all out through Christ's atoning blood. Accept, for his sake, our humble thanks for all the mercies of the day. We bless thee, that thou hast added another day to our life, and hast brought us thus far on our voyage in safety. O take us this night under thy fatherly care. Thou art the Keeper of Israel, who slumberest not, nor sleepest : thine eye beholds us in the darkness, as much as in the light. We would therefore humbly trust in the shadow of thy wings. Shield us through the watches of the night, and cause us to see thy loving-kindness in the morning. And give us grace, O Lord, to live by faith in thy Son : that when the night of death approaches, we may rejoice in hope of an everlasting day: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

**4. A PRAYER FOR THE MORNING OF THE LORD'S DAY.**  
This Prayer may be used before the public reading of the Scriptures, or of a Discourse; & the following Prayer may be used after.

O God, the heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament sheweth the work of thy hands : day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth know-

ledge, concerning thee. All thy works praise thee, in every part of the earth; and of the ocean. At thy command, the sun goes forth to enlighten the world: his morning beams tinge the clouds, and gleam upon the waves. We bless thee for his returning light. But, Lord, we bless thee still more for the brighter light of the gospel; which displays thy glory with a richer lustre. All praise be to thy name, that through thy tender mercy, the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. Through thy rich grace to our lost world, the Sun of righteousness hath arisen upon us, with healing in his wings. O may his refreshing beams, even the enlivening influences of his grace, shine into our hearts; to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; and to warm and cheer our souls with thy transcendent love! We bless thee for sparing us unto another sabbath. O that, on this day of the resurrection of Christ, our affections may rise toward the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God! Thou seest, Lord, that we are now far from thy house of prayer: yet, glory be to thy name, we have access to the throne of grace; and possess thy blessed word, with other means of spiritual improvement. O help us to worship thee in spirit and in truth, in faith and love; and grant us sweet communion with thee, in all our devotions! Lord, be present with us this day, as well as with all thy worshipping assemblies on shore, and with our brethren, who, like us, are upon the face of the waters. The Lord hear the prayers of his people this day;

and make it a blessed day unto thousands, by refreshing the hearts of his children, and turning sinners from their evil ways, to give them his great salvation. Visit us, O God, with a sense of thy pardoning love; and with the joys of the Holy Ghost; and may our whole souls cleave unto thee, through faith in Christ our exalted Redeemer. Bless us all the day long; let us not profane thy holy sabbath; but, even while we are employed in the necessary duty of the ship, may we meditate on thy truths, and lift up our hearts unto thee.—Hear these our supplications from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and accept us: and unto thee, the infinite, three-one God, be eternal glory and praise. Amen.

#### 5. A PRAYER FOR THE EVENING OF THE LORD'S DAY.

O Lord God, thou art the fountain of living waters, the source of every joy! Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; to be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Blessed are they who surround thy throne on high; to see thy glory, and feast on thy love: and blessed likewise they who have communion with thee in thine ordinances below. Lord, we thank thee, that though we have not this day enjoyed the privilege of worshipping in thy sanctuary, we have been allowed in some sort to approach thy presence. O let thy blessing follow the religious exercises in which we have been engaged! Let thy word be hid in our hearts, that we may not sin against thee; let it dwell in us richly in all wisdom: and O may our souls be powerfully drawn towards Jesus Christ; that we may glory in his presence.

be crucified unto the world! Lord, may thine afflictive blessing attend the dispensation of thine ordinances this day, in all parts of thy church; and O that thy gospel may spread through the world, to enlighten the darkened nations; till every shore, and every sea, be gladdened with thy praises, and the whole earth be filled with thy glory!—Blessed be thy name for all the comforts of this day. Pardon, we beseech thee, the sins which we have committed: for alas! we do not keep our sabbaths as we ought. O prepare us for an eternal sabbath! May thy goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life, and may we dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen.

#### 6. A PRAYER IN A STORM.

O God of our salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are cast off upon the sea! unto thee we flee for refuge in the hour of danger. We see thy dreadful majesty; we feel the pressure of thine almighty hand; and who knoweth the power of thine anger? O Lord, we deserve to sink into the billows of thy wrath: but have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; and blot out all our sins, for the sake of Jesus, our glorious Saviour. O look down upon us with an eye of compassion! Let not thy wrath devour us. If it please thee, O Lord, let not the waves overwhelm us; abate the fury of the tempest; and bless the means which we use for our preservation: that in thy goodness we may reach our desired haven, and again see our dear kindred, and thy house of prayer. Yet, O our God! we would resign ourselves to thy sovereign will; and, if

thou hast sent this storm to call us hence, prepare us for appearing in thy presence ! Let us not sink in the gulf of wo ; but may our souls land safe on the shores above, to praise and enjoy thee for ever ! O infinite Jehovah, we commit unto thee our souls, our bodies, our relations, our all ! Inspire us with faith and courage in this hour of trial : and if it please thee to save us from this imminent danger, let our whole lives be devoted unto thee. Hear us in thy rich compassion, for Jesus Christ's sake.. Amen.

#### 7. THANKSGIVING AFTER A STORM.

O Lord of hosts, thou art the God that doest wonders! Thou rulest in the raging of the sea ; and when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Thy voice can quell the fury of the elements, and calm the troubled ocean. We bless thee, O thou God of our mercies, that thou hast saved us from death; and that the proud waters, which threatened us with instant destruction, have not been suffered to overwhelm us ! What shall we render unto the Lord, for all his benefits to us ? How shall we express our gratitude for this signal deliverance ? Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name. O thou merciful God ! we would dedicate unto thee that life which thou hast saved. Let the thoughts of this gracious interposition, remind us of the wonders of redeeming love, and make us more earnest in seeking that salvation which is in Christ, which is heavenly and eternal. O shed abroad thy love in our hearts, and fill us with joy and peace in believing ; that we may be to the praise of thy glory : through Jesus Christ ! Amen.

## HYMNS FOR SEAMEN.

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### 1. *God's Wonders in the Deep.* WATTS.

1. Would you behold the works of God,  
His wonders in the world abroad,  
Go with the mariners, and trace  
The unknown regions of the seas.
2. They leave their native shores behind,  
And seize the favour of the wind ;  
Till God commands, and tempests rise,  
That heave the ocean to the skies.
3. Now to the heavens they mount a main,  
Now sink to dreadful deeps again ;  
What strange affrights young sailors feel,  
And like a stagg'ring drunkard reel !
4. When land is far, and death is nigh,  
Lost to all hope, to God they cry :  
His mercy bears their loud address,  
And sends salvation in distress.
5. He bids the winds their wrath assuage,  
The furious waves forget their rage ;  
'Tis calm : and sailors smile to see  
The haven where they wish'd to be.
6. O may the sons of men record  
The wondrous goodness of the Lord !  
Let them their grateful off'rings bring,  
And in his church his glory sing.

### 2. *Safety in God's Protection.* ADDISON.

1. How are thy servants bless'd, O Lord,  
How sure is their defence !  
Eternal wisdom is their guide,  
Their help Omnipotence.
2. When by the dreadful tempest borne,  
High on the broken wave,

They know thou art not slow to hear,  
Nor impotent to save.

3. The storm is laid; the winds retire,  
Obedient to thy will;  
The sea that roars at thy command,  
At thy command is still:
4. In midst of dangers, fears and deaths,  
Thy goodness we'll adore;  
We'll praise thee for thy mercies past,  
And humbly hope for more.
5. Our life, while thou preserv'st that life,  
Thy sacrifice shall be;  
And death, when death shall be our lot,  
Shall join but stalk to thee.
3. *God's Dominion over the Sea.* Watts: altered.

1. God of the seas, thy thund'ring voice  
Makes all the roaring waves rejoice!  
And 'neath the soft word of thy command  
Can stink them silent in the sand.
2. If but a Moses wave thy rod,  
The sea divides and owns its God;  
The stormy floods their Maker knew,  
And let his chosen armies through.
3. The scaly flocks amidst the sea,  
To thee, their Lord, a tribute pay;  
The smallest fish that swims the flood,  
Leaps up, and means a praise to God.
4. The largest monsters of the deep,  
On thy commands attendance keep;  
By thy permission sport and play,  
And cleave along their foaming way.
5. If God his voice of tempest rear,  
Leviathan lies still and fears:  
Anon he lifts his nostrils high,  
And spouts the ocean to the sky.
6. How is thy glorious pow'r ador'd,  
Amidst these wat'ry nations, Lord!

Then let not men who trace the seas  
Refuse to sing their Maker's praise.

7. Let them, while on the flood they ride,  
Adore the hand that smooths the tide :  
And, while such miracles they see,  
O let them tune a song to thee !

4. *God moderates affliction.* DARNER.

1. Great Ruler of all nature's frame,  
We own thy power divine ;  
We hear thy breath in every storm ;  
For all the winds are thine.

2. Wide as they sweep their sounding way,  
They work thy sovereign will ;  
And, aw'd by thy majestic voice,  
Confusion shall stand still.

3. Thy mercy tempers every blast,  
To them that seek thy face ;  
And mingles with the tempest's roar  
The whispers of thy grace.

4. Those gentle whispers let me hear,  
Till all the tumult cease ;  
And gales of paradise shall tell  
My weary soul to peace.

5. *The Seaman's Prayer.*

Composed for this Work, by M. E. S., a Whitby Lady.

1. Almighty God, who rulest the seas,  
Whose word the winds obey ;  
O fill our hearts with hope and peace,  
And guide us on our way !

2. On launching forth into the deep,  
Our hearts we lift to thee,  
That thou in safety may'st us keep,  
And our Protector be.

3. When threat'ning tempests shake our bark,  
And dangers fierce draw nigh,  
Still on thy providence, though dark,  
Assist us to rely.

4. Lord, put thy fear within our heart,  
 That we, in thee secure,  
 May never from thy laws depart,  
 But keep thy precepts sure.

5. By faith, to Jesus may we go,  
 In every time of need ;  
 And when oppress'd with sin and wo,  
 His merits may we plead.

6. Thus, till the storms of life are past,  
 May we on thee depend:  
 Prove thee our Saviour to the last,  
 And our eternal Friend !

6. *A Heavenly Gale longed for.* — *TOPPLADY.*

1. At Anchor laid, remote from home,  
 Tailing, I cry, Sweet Spirit, come !  
 Celestial breeze, no longer stay,  
 But swell my sails, and speed my way !

2. Fain would I mount, fain would I glow,  
 And loose my cable from below :  
 But I can only spread my sail ;  
 THOU, THOU must breathe th' auspicious gale.

7. *The Lord will provide.* — Suited to Lect. iv. — *COWPER.*

1. The saints should never be dismay'd  
 Nor sink in hopeless fear ;  
 For when they least expect his aid,  
 The Saviour will appear.

2. This Abra'm found, he rais'd the knife,  
 God saw, and said, " Forbear !  
 Yon ram shall yield his meener life ;  
 Behold the victim there."

3. When Jonah sunk beneath the wave,  
 He thought to rise no more ;  
 But God prepar'd a fish to save,  
 And bear him to the shore.

4. Blest proofs of power and grace divine,  
 That meet us in his word !

May every deep-felt care of mine  
Be trusted with the Lord.

6. Wait for his seasonable aid,  
And though it tarry, wait;  
The promise may be long delay'd,  
But cannot come too late.

8. *Trust in Providence.* WESLEY.

1. God of my life, whose gracious power  
Through varied deaths my soul hath led,  
Or turn'd aside the fatal hour,  
Or lifted up my sinking head :

2. In all my ways thy hand I own,  
Thy ruling Providence I see :  
Assist me still my course to run,  
And still direct my paths to thee.

3. Oft hath the sea confess'd thy power,  
And given me back at thy command :  
It could not, Lord, my life devour,  
Safe in the hollow of thine hand.

4. Whither, O whither should I fly !  
But to my loving Saviour's breast;  
Secure within thine arms to lie,  
And safe beneath thy wings to rest.

9. *Jonah's faith.*—Suited to Lect. v. DODDRIDGE.

1. Lord, we have broke thy holy laws,  
And slighted all thy grace ;  
And justly thy vindictive wrath  
Might cast us from thy face.

2. Yet while such precedents appear,  
Mark'd in thy sacred book,  
We from these depths of guilt and fear,  
Will to thy temple look.

3. To thee, in our Redeemer's name  
We raise our humble cries  
May these our prayers, perfum'd by him  
Like grateful incense rise.

4. O never may our hopeless eyes  
 An absent God deplore,  
 Where the dear temples of thy love  
 Shall stand reveal'd no more !

6. Far from those regions of despair,  
 Appoint our souls a place,  
 Where not a frown, through endless years,  
 Shall veil thy lovely face.

10. *Jonah's Gaurd.*—Suited to Lcot. x. *Newton.*

1. The evils that beset our path,  
 Who can prevent or cure ?  
 We stand upon the brink of death,  
 When most we seem secure.

2. If we to day sweet peace possess,  
 It soon may be withdrawn :  
 Some change may plunge us in distress,  
 Before to-morrow's dawn.

2. The gourds from which we look for fruit,  
 Produce us only pain ;  
 A worm unseen attacks the root,  
 And all our hopes are vain.

4. Since sin has fill'd the earth with wo,  
 And creatures fade and die,  
 Lord, wean our hearts from things below,  
 And fix our hopes on high.

11. *The Spiritual Voyage.* *TOPLAST's COLL.*

1. Jesus, at thy command,  
 I launch into the deep ;  
 And leave my native land,  
 Where sin lulls all asleep :  
 For thee I would the world resign,  
 And sail to heaven, with thee and thine.

2. Thou art my pilot wise ;  
 My compass is thy word :  
 My soul each storm defies,  
 While I have such a Lord !  
 I trust thy faithfulness and power,  
 To save me in the trying hour.

3. Though rocks and quicksands deep  
     Through all my passage lie ;  
     Yet Christ will safely keep,  
         And guide me with his eye.  
     My anchor, hope, shall firm abide,  
     And I each boisterous storm outside.

4. By faith I see the land,  
     The port of endless rest ;  
     My soul, thy sails expand,  
         And fly to Jesus' breast.  
     O may I reach the heavenly shore,  
     Where winds and waves distress no more.

12. *Sixty-ninth invited to praise God.—Written for Disc. I.*

1. Ye British seamen, praise the Lord ;  
     To you the work belongs ;  
     For God invites you, by his word,  
         To raise your gospel songs.

2. His glory shines in every ray,  
     It floats in every breeze ;  
     On clouds and storms it wings its way,  
         It rolls along the seas.

3. Come, then, ye seamen of the isles,  
     Jehovah's praises sing ;  
     And while you meet his gracious smile,  
         Your joyful anthems bring.

4. Rejoice in his redeeming love,  
     His wondrous mercy tell,  
     How Christ descended from above,  
         To save our souls from hell.

5. Let the sweet praises of his name  
     Resound from pole to pole ;  
     To every shore his grace proclaim  
         As far as billows roll.

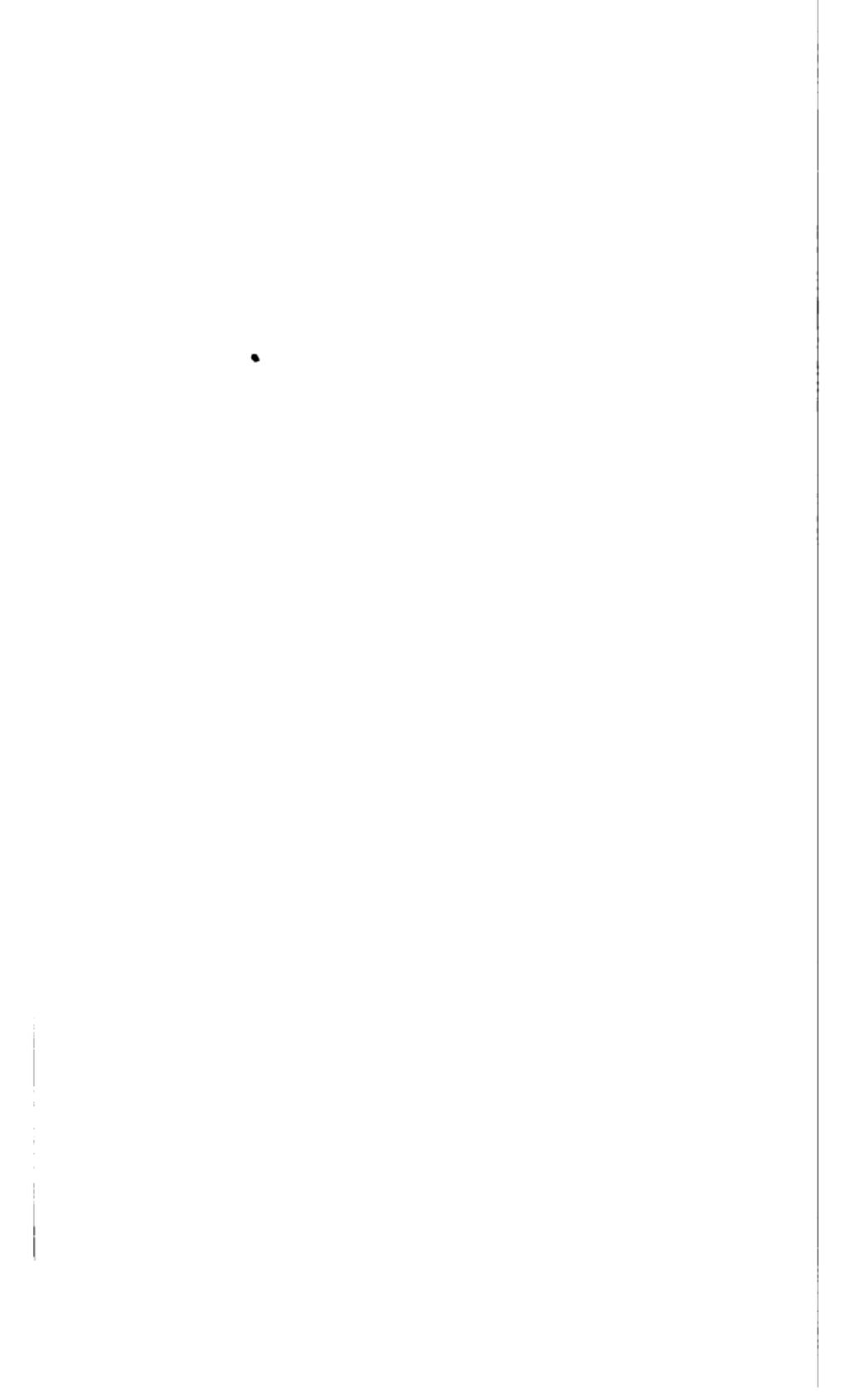
6. At every time, in every place,  
     The glorious theme pursue :  
     And long to praise him face to face,  
         In anthems ever new.

13. *Christ the Seaman's Stay.*—Written for Disc. II.

1. Glory to God, whose holy book  
    Directs us in his way,  
    And bids our souls in trouble look  
        To Christ the Seaman's Stay.
2. When far from home and kindred dear,  
    We pass a tedious day,  
    Our comfort lies in living near  
        To Christ the Seaman's Stay.
3. If sore temptations should assail,  
    To lead our feet astray,  
    Against them all we shall prevail,  
        Through Christ the Seaman's Stay.
4. When clouds of guilt, and threat'ning wrath,  
    Appear in dread array,  
    Our trembling spirits flee by faith  
        To Christ the Seaman's Stay.
5. When tempests rage and billows roll,  
    To fill us with dismay,  
    They shall not overwhelm our soul:—  
        Christ is the Seaman's Stay.
6. Should Providence command the waves  
    To sweep our lives away,  
    Safe shall we sleep in wat'ry graves,  
        In Christ the Seaman's Stay.
7. The ocean shall give up its dead;  
    An everlasting day  
    Of joy and glory, we shall lead,  
        With Christ the Seaman's Stay.

FINIS.







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